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european trash cinema

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cover is from the film:

CAGED WOMEN IN PURGATORY

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As ETC reaches double digits (*this is #10!*), there are some exciting activities going on behind the scenes.

Soon, we will become a central clearinghouse for hard-to-get items. Before the end of the year we'll offer a soundtrack CD that features music from 5 Jean Rollin films. Plus a CD [the first ever release of] Claudio Simonetti's music to Michele Soavi's STAGEFRIGHT. I'm currently writing a book on European thrillers which will cover over 250 Italian, Spanish, French and German films. We will publish as soon as it's done (probably early to mid 1995). There's more... but it's too early to talk about them yet.

Which reminds me-- our most popular (and rarest) ETC, #6: *The Giallo Issue* is now back in print! It includes 100+ reviews of Italy's most outrageous thrillers. Yours for \$6! If you missed it before, don't wait. Send for it today.

Meanwhile, in the current ETC, we wrap up the two interviews begun last time. Erik Sulev weighs in with a thorough exploration of the BLACK EMANUELLE series. Steve Fentone delves into the slimy underworld of Italian gangster films. Charles Bucklin proclaims his love for the gothic. And welcome back Dan Pydynkowski (last seen in ETC #4) as he does his best to expose the charms of Carmen Russo.

Incidentally, you can now send E-mail direct to both our publications at the following computer address:

74563.1756 @compuserve

--Craig

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SHOOTIN' THE SHIT

random thoughts, comments, and reviews by
CRAIG LEDBETTER

Some months ago, I attended the 60th annual MIFED film market in Milano, Italy. Very much a showcase for film companies to market their product, for ETC lovers, it's a rare

opportunity to see the newest Italian, Spanish and French genre films on a big screen. Best of all, because all the studios hope to make a sale to America (which is fucking unlikely), all films are either

duhned or subtitled in English. There were 15 screening rooms running films continuously from 9:30 am to 7:30 pm.

Besides the screening rooms, there were hundreds of hoots set up for companies to hawk their entire catalog of films. Italian production entities, familiar with ETC readers included: P.A.C., Variety and VIP International. Because I was there as a member of the press instead of as a film buyer, most companies (except P.A.C.) treated me like shit. Once I caught on, I started handing out my business card instead and was treated much better. Celebrities there included Tinto Brass, who hosted a 15 minute sneak preview of his new film, *THE VOYEUR* (his cameo appearance in the film shown at the preview did not survive the film's final cut), and Franco Nero publicizing his new Spaghetti Western, *JONATHAN OF THE BEARS*.

Although there were lots of publicity flyers given away (the walk through a long corridor on the way to the screening rooms always yielded a few goodies), it was



*Monique Sella and Gabriele Gori
in Dangerous Attraction*

the films themselves I'd come to see. It was great to know that directors like Sergio Martino, Stelvio Massi, and Bruno Mattei were still quite active, but depressing to know their newest work most likely won't see the light of day here.

The best film I saw was Sergio Martino's **CRAVING DESIRE**, an erotic thriller that at least attempted to throw in a few offbeat elements (like cannibalism!) to accompany the sweet sex. It also has a nice cameo by Serena Grandi. Prolific Bruno Mattei had two films showing under two new pseudonyms. **DAUGHTER OF A LIE** (Duh, I wonder what films he's ripping off here?) under the name Pierre LeBlanc stars David Warbeck and a true blue horror effort, **EYES WITHOUT A FACE** where he uses the nom-de-plum, Herik Montgomery. While not very good, **EYES WITHOUT A FACE** was still a wonderfully trashy effort as gore and nudity were abundant. Plus, the device the killer uses to gouge out the victims' eyeballs is definitely unique.

Saving the worst for last, there was Fabrizio de Angelis' **BREAKFAST WITH DRACULA**. Shot in Miami with a no-name cast (excluding a hammy David Warbeck), this is a film so stupid and ineptly made I'm sure it'll get a stateside video release. A young man is chosen to carry on the

Dracula legacy and becomes a babe chasing idiot. This one would be rated G so avoid at all costs!

Other films seen include **THE LONG SILENCE** (a low key crime film featuring a great score by Ennio Morricone), **HUEVOS DE ORO** (the newest sex, comedy, tragedy from Bigas Luna) and two Stelvio Massi action efforts, **POWER AND LOVERS** and **HIGH RISK**. Special thanks to Peter Blumenstock and Max Della Morn for their European hospitality.

REDEMPTION VIDEO

Redemption Video, located in England, is without question one of the few labels helping to maintain access to many wonderful Euro-trash efforts that you read about here and other like publications. What's ironical is that the label exists in one of the most repressive, censorship crazy countries in the world. Unfortunately, this carries over into the running times of some of their releases, as parts of the graphic mayhem is missing. On the plus side, the prints used in the transfers are without question some of the best I've ever seen. A good example is **THE RETURN OF THE EVIL DEAD** (the second in Amando De Ossorio's *Blind Dead* series). Here in the United States, the film was released on the obscure Bingo Video label.

Anyone who has suffered with headaches and eyestrain after watching it is understandable. The print looks like it was found at the bottom of a public shithouse. Watching Redemption's print revealed all types of things going on, making it seem like a completely different film.

Jesus Franco's films are a particular favorite of the label and three of his best have recently debuted. **KISS ME MONSTER** & **SADIST EROTICA** star Janine Reynaud (Mrs. Michel Lemoine) and Rossana Yanni as two female Secret Agents who use their sexy charms during their investigations. More than one evildoer wilts before their exposed cleavage, spilling all the beans. No censorship worries here as the films were made before Franco went porno. **KISS ME MONSTER** (there is no such beast in the film) barely edges out **SADIST EROTICA** as my favorite and, once again, Redemption's transfers are top-notch.

The third Franco film is his original version of **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD**. What distinguishes this one (it's in French with English subtitles) from all the rest is that it actually makes sense (well, for a Franco film). There's no distracting zombie footage inserted (done by Jean Rollin at Eurocine's request when they realized Jess Franco hadn't shot any footage of the *Living Dead*!).

Branching out from Europe, *Redemption* has also released the South American lensed, **BARE BEHIND BARS**, directed by Osvaldo de Olivera. This quintessential W.I.P. film features fresh faces (Thank God, no Lina Romay!) amidst the sleaze and violence of the genre. The English dubbing adds to the fun and the final orgy between buxom babes and stereotypical fat slob guards will have you in tears (I hope the actresses were paid well!). A final word about *Redemption* is their packaging. It's top-of-the-line with arty farty B&W photography on the front cover and color scenes from the film on the back. They can be contacted at 32 Compton Street, London W1V 5PD, UK. But remember--the tapes will be in PAL format.

EURO GOODIES FROM JAPAN

While in recently Japan, my co-editor Tom Weisser and I found some great Euro trash items on video. Besides perennial sleaze favorite Frank De Niro's **EROTIC WOMEN'S PRISON**, a sleazy thriller by Gerard Kikoine called **FIRE UNDER THE SKIN**, an English Language print of Tinto Brass' **MIRANDA**, and yet another new version of **THE STORY OF O**--this one from Spain--(to name only a few), we also located longer, English dubbed versions of

ARABELLA, THE BLACK ANGEL and KILLING BIRDS. **ARABELLA** is without question, Stelvio Massi's sleaze epic with starlet Tini Canino (niece of Rita Hayworth) giving the performance of her career. Playing a sexually frustrated married woman, she fucks anything that walks. Meanwhile a lesbian police detective is trying to track down a killer who cuts the privates off her male victims. These disparate plot points collide for a whopper of a climax.

Although he's not listed as the director, it's well known that Joe D'Amato (Aristide Massaccesi) ended up firing Claudio Lattanza and finished the directing chores for **KILLING BIRDS**, a gory zombie film starring Robert (THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.) Vaughan. This version is much longer than the previous English edition from Puerto Rico.

If you're nostalgic for the good ol' days of Italo-zombie mayhem, check this one out. Finally, an offbeat Voodoo-themed chiller, Daniela (THE GIRL IN ROOM 2A) Giordano and the late William Berger star in a film called **SHADOW OF ILLUSION**. It's by the prolific Mario Caiano and represents a strange blip in the man's career. Neither overly gory or sleazy, it's a suspenseful effort that certainly rewards the patient viewer.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

BRIGHT LIGHTS #12- \$4.95, 52 pages, Gary Morris, P.O. Box 420987, San Francisco, CA 94142-0987. This professional looking labor of love reminds me a lot of what used to be the Best film magazine of the seventies, *The Velvet Light Trap*. It's too bad 99% of you have never seen that zine and so won't know what a compliment this is. The current issue's main topic is Film Noir and Neo-noir and inside you'll find intelligent commentary on said subject. Plus an interview with Fellini, laserdiscs, film festivals and more.

FATAL VISIONS #16 \$6.00, 40 pages, Michael Helms, P.O. Box 133, Northcote, 3070 VIC. Australia. Lance Henrikson is interviewed, all the latest film and videos to hit Australia are covered, Chinatown Beat looks at San Francisco's Hong Kong theaters, and the usual disturbing true-crime interview (this time with bondage queen, Betsy Blood). Essential shit.

FRANCO FILM 90 French francs, 74 pages, Lucas Balho, 78, Rue de la folie Regnault, 75011 Paris, France. For those who can't get enough information on ol' Jesus, here's more! All the text is in French but you get detailed credits and lots of lots of

obscure ad mats from his films. A visual buffet.

GIALLO PAGES #3 \$9.00, 44 pages, On Line Publishing, P.O. Box 134, West PDO, Nottingham, NG7 7BW, UK. Interviews with John Morghen, Lucio Fulci, Quentin Tarantino, lots of Italian horror and exploitation film reviews, a look at Barbara Steele and much more. **BUY THIS FUCKER!!**

THE GOBLIN #6 £2.75, 36 Pages, Chris Gallant, Ivy Cottage, Rectory Lane, Walgrave, Northants, NN6 9QJ, UK. The fanzine of European Horror cinema covers DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE, Francesco Barilli, Lesbian vampire cinema, Argento on TRAUMA and more.

GUIDA AL CINEMA SPLATTER 250 pages, Gian Luca Castoldi, Via Masaccio 229, 50142 Florence, Italy. Italian text. Hundreds of reviews of all the usual suspects. Unless you understand the language there's not much here to look at as pictures are few and far between. Great color shot of Leatherface on the cover. Castoldi offers a 35% discount if you buy it from him so write to him at the above address.

HEADPRESS #9 \$7.00, 68 Pages, P.O. Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1

4ET, UK. Rage and torment issue. Nothing else quite like this one. Interviews with porno auteurs, disgusting photos, guide to public restrooms, discussions with S&M superstars, you name it, Headpress has or will get around to covering it.

HORROR PICTURES COLLECTION \$7.00, 40 pages, Gérard Noël, 90, rue Gandhi, 46000 Cabors, France. You'd think with so many Jesus Franco projects out there it would be tough to come up with some new

stills from his films. Apparently not as the latest from Noël adds color and B&W shots to the mix. Every Horror Pictures Collection have become instant collectors items and this one is no exception.

LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS #12 \$6.95, 130 pages, Richard Klemensen, P.O. Box 3107, Des Moines, IA 50316. Forget all those other Hammer magazine wannabes floundering around out there. If you want THE one, get THIS one.



Look who's reading ET!

Paul Naschy

MAGAZINES OF THE MOVIES #5 \$8.00, 52 Pages, Ray Stewart, 45 Killyhawn Road, Saintfield, Ballynahinch, Co Down N. Ireland, BT24 7JP. Ray's collectors' guide to film magazines and fanzines around the world chronicles most of the major efforts for 1993. With this edition he's expanded to full size and it looks as terrific as it reads. Ray is truly an unsung hero in keeping tabs with what's out there in the way of film.

MANACOA FILES JESS FRANCO VOL.1 \$10, 84 pages, Alain Petit, 32 rue des 3 Faucons, 84000 Avignon, France. What a shame this is only available in French! Petit acted in several Franco films and obviously can approach his subject quite differently than the other works on this most prolific director. This volume takes up through **FUTURE WOMEN** and contains a ton of photos (some reproduced better than others). I hope Alain is able to finish this great project.

NECRONOMICON #5 \$7.00, 60 Pages, Andy Black, 15 Jubilee Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 1LB, UK. A professionally laid out and printed zine (always contains color exterior and interior covers) that features articles, interviews and reviews of interest to ETC fans. This issue features, **VENUS IN FURS** (the Dallamano version), **WICKER MAN**,

Cicciolina, and an interview with Umberto Lenzi. Recommended.

QUATERMASS #1 \$7.00, 110 pages, Apdo. 5100, 48009 Bilbao, Spain. This Spanish language digest sized zine is a great looking package. A tribute to Vincent Price, article on Tod Browning, guide to gore films, and followup article on Paul Naschy highlight the issue.

SAMHAIN #45 \$4.95, 40 Pages, John Gullidge, 77 Exeter Rd., Topsham, Exeter, Devon EX3 0LX, UK. A very well done issue devoted to all the recent censorship shit going on in England these days. I congratulate John for not hacking down and going on the offensive. In a few years, if Janet Reno has her way, we're going to need to follow in John's footsteps.

SHOCK CINEMA #6 \$4.00, 52 pages, Steve Puchalski, P.O. Box 518, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009. Get this one and you won't need any other review zine. Over 90 reviews fill out this Mother, featuring the wit and wisdom of Mr. Puchalski. I appreciate the fact that Steve goes out of his way to discuss **OBSCURE** films. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

SHOCKING IMAGES #3 \$3.95, 32 pages, Mark Jason Murray, P.O. Box 7853, Citrus Heights, CA 95621.

A very well laid out and reproduced zine that features a profile of José Mojica Marins, Nick Zedd, lots of reviews, plus an interview with Rudy Ray Moore and Asian Film coverage too.

SPAGHETTI CINEMA #56 \$5.00, 50 pages, Bill Connolly, 6635 De Longpre #4, Hollywood, CA 90028. This issue features part two of an interview and career overview on Walter Barnes, an American actor with a prolific European film career. The rest of the issue is filled with readers' letters.

2000 MANIACS #14 350Ptas., 100 pages, Manuel Valencia, Apdo. 5251, 46009 Valencia, Spain. Very NICE looking Spanish language zine that is crammed with photos to make up for the language barrier. Coverage of US Independent Full Moon, George Romero, Porno in Barcelona, Leon Klimovsky and much, much more.

WET PAINT #39 \$3.00, 32 pages, Jeff Smith, 3907 Block Dr., #2201, Irving, TX 75038. Color covers now highlight this eclectic digest size zine from longtime friend, Jeff Smith. Highlights include an interview with Freddie Francis, animated Batman episode guide, Asian film reviews by Erik Sulev, and lots of film reviews. One of the few zines who refuses to specialize and that alone should account for something.

LETTERS

Your comments are welcomed. Here are some recent ETC letters:

I part company with your decision to not carry filmographies. I was looking forward to the Femi Benussi Filmography! (so was Erik Sulev, Ed.) You have gone from one extreme (detailed filmographies with credits), to the other (no filmographies). Take a look at the ETC #4 with the Edwige Fenech article. Her filmography listed the year of the film, the title, and the director. That's the information a typical reader is looking for.

Sean Sullivan
Minnesota

Perhaps a compromise can be worked out on the filmographies. I just know the days of endless detail are over.

Just thought I would write a few words about how great ETC #9 was, and to say that it was good to see a more varied approach to the whole genre, rather than just movies; although that is exactly the main reason I subscribe.

Greg Walters

When I was interviewed for my new job, one question the peer panel asked me was, "What is your favorite magazine?" Before my brain could veer to the middle of the road, I said, "European Trash Cinema". Turns out

they liked the outré-ness of that answer. . . so there!
Kirby Mills
Oregon

ETC #9 arrived safely and was thoroughly enjoyed by its recipient. The reviews, especially Boh Sargent's were very good and covered quite rare material, but surely Michael Lehning should have mentioned that MURDER BY DESIGN is, for all its craft, a boring film with a disappointing denouement.

Neil Kerr
Scotland

I enjoyed the coverage on French diva Mylene Farmer in ETC 9. It's odd, but in a way-- expected, that ETC would be the first magazine in America to spotlight this European superstar. Now, how about something on singer Vanessa Paradis?

John Fetcher

For the moment, would you settle for a photo of Vanessa?



I haven't read all of ETC #9 yet but what stands out, even more than the Mylene Farmer material and lack of filmographies, is the book review of Lucio Fulci's UNDER THE KNIFE. I don't know what other readers will think of a book that isn't about movies being reviewed in a movie magazine, but I found it to be a pleasant surprise.

Clint Leugner
Canada

I received the latest ETC and, as usual, devoured it in one fell swoop. My favorite hits were your column and the excellent, in depth interview with the ever likeable Enzo Castellari, as well as the very well thought out and written appreciation of KEOMA that followed it.

Knowing what a big movie huff he is, I'm sure in DAY OF THE COBRA, the sexy femme fatale who turns out to be a man and beats up Franco Nero was an homage to Blake Edwards' GUNN, which has the same scene at the end.

The hit on Femi Benussi was good too, though I'm not a particular fan of hers. The reviews were interesting and informative as usual. Special mention to the one which gave all the interesting background on Carlo Lizzani, but how could the writer forget that some of his most interesting films (to ETC readers) are THE HILLS RUN RED, PRAY AND

DIE, THE VIOLENT FOUR and WAKE UP AND KILL? Saying that Maurizio Lucidi's MURDER BY DESIGN was "inspired" by Hitchcock's STRANGERS ON A TRAIN is a little mild, considering the plot was almost an exact copy.

Of course, the Italians excel at this type of creative plagiarism, and as the writer pointed out, no doubt the Italian atmosphere and style gave the film its own identity.

Richard Menello
New Jersey

John Martin chides what he regards as a "myth", the feminist notion that many exploitation directors include scenes in which women are sexually assaulted but are portrayed as liking it, and then he acknowledges that TERROR EXPRESS (ETC #8) features such a scene but implies that because it is poorly-shot, it doesn't qualify as such an objectionable element! Huh?

Although I don't support everything feminist do (their censorship crusades have been particularly chilling), they make a valid point with respect to the perpetuated lies about women and sexuality in movies like this (and TIE ME UP, TIE ME DOWN, to name a mainstream example), and the sequence cited by John in TERROR EXPRESS is not only accompanied by erotic music (as if the audience is supposed to enjoy rape), it is

not the only such assault in the movie!

Lorne Marshall
Maryland

A PIC YOU GOTTA SEE:

ADRENALINE

There are very few French filmmakers I give a damn about. There's Jean Rollin and... ugh...

Shit!

It's worse than I thought. So, when I was confronted with this tape, a series of brief horror vignettes by a variety of French directors, well, let's just say my initial reaction was one of apathy. Pass me that plate of crow, cause it's time for me to eat it! Not all of these shorts are winners, but the vast majority of them really work.

The bridge between the short films is the recurring image (in B&W, as are almost half of the films shown) of people standing in line, waiting to see someone or something. When the film ends, you're left to analyze what it all means. However, it's the plethora of storylines these shorts display that'll have you talking.

Picture a pretty girl sleeping in a big bed, being woken to the sounds and sight of her ceiling lowering itself to crush her. She does all she can to save herself (and the film's pace will have you on the edge of your seat) and just when you think she's safe... well, say no more.

Then there are the quickies: an old crazy woman with a cat in her grocery bag slams it against the wall so she can paint a heart and arrow with the feline's blood. A man is dismembered piece by piece so that only his head is left... but, as it turns out, that's all right with his girlfriend-- at least his tongue still works.

One of my favorites involves a guy who leaves for work in his car and the vehicle ends up taking control of his destination. Where it goes and what it does to him is a shocker. Next, a man goes to buy a house from an elderly couple and ends up trapped in an obstacle course made up of household utensils (forks, knives, irons, etc.) that methodically tear him to pieces. Or the episode involving a possessed TV set and an exorcist who specializes in such patients. The shows on the TV get more and more out of control as the sketch continues.

Most of the segments have no dialogue, the few that do are in French (with English subtitles if you acquire your print through Video Search of Miami). The great thing about the anthology is that none of the segments wear out their welcome by being too long. Most impressive is the high degree of talent involved in the proceedings. Who says the French can't make effective horror films? Not Me!



ETC REVIEWS

CRAWLERS (1990)

**Directed by Fabrizio Laurenti/
David Hills (Aristide Massaccesi)
Reviewed by Steve Bisette**

The latest "Joe D'Amato" Filmirage production (yes, it's Aristide Massaccesi hiding under his "David Hills" moniker) was actually completed in 1990 as TROLL 3, a nominal sequel to "D'Amato's" previous direct-to-video travesty TROLL 2, which was a sequel in title only to Charles Band and John Beuchler's TROLL (1986). Though it's pretty tenuous, TROLL 3 did have a tentative link with the original, in which Sonny Bono metamorphosed into a vine-sprouting asparagus. See, now, there are these hyperactive roots which seek out warm-blooded prey - well, you get the idea. Anyhoot, "D'Amato" completely deep-sixed the TROLL franchise with the abominable TROLL 2, so TROLL 3 sat on the shelf for almost three years before hitting the video shelves this past Christmas as CRAWLERS.

Ho. Ho. Ho.

The opening sequence recalls Argento's PHENOMENA: a young girl misses her bus and meets a dire fate in a woodland countryside, chased into the Pacific Northwest

wilderness by a lecherous truck driver. Estranged one-time lovers Josie (Mary Sellers) and Matt (Jason Saucier) stumble over the girl's body, and the yawn-fest intrigue begins. With the aid of an investigative reporter (Patrick Collins) and alcoholic Dr. Taylor (Bubba Reeves), they're victimized by local scumbag nuclear power plant officials trying to cover-up a series of deaths caused by the parasitic mutant ground pine created by their illegal dumping of toxic wastes. These ambulatory and carnivorous root systems aren't too photogenic, as ridiculous point-of-view shots (from the roots' P.O.V.), shots of victims' legs, and rustling bushes dominate the proceedings. Illusion Tech's shoddy rubber-root FX eventually let us watch as the crawlers crush and strangle their prey; the goriest death is reserved for the corrupt small-town sheriff (Vince O'Neil), but it's hardly worth the wait.

The irresponsible & moronic climax finds "inspirational" community action pitting the local yokels against the title menace, attacking the "source" of the crawlers at the nuclear waste dump site with picks, shovels, and hoes. Never mind that the roots evidently network through miles of forest land: these rednecks hack away

at the tentacles and handle the deadly barrels without even wearing gloves! Thankfully (?), the government cavalry of bulldozers save the day (??), crushing (!!!) and hurrying the barrels, which apparently and quite mysteriously ends the threat... until, that Christmas Eve, rubber roots sprout out of Josie's Christmas Tree stand...

Like I said, Ho. Ho. Ho.

There's not much here for desperate "D'Amato" aficionados. There's the telltale "Costumes by Laura Gemser" credit (previously seen on "George Eastman's" METAMORPHOSIS, 1990, wherein "Laura" at least had a cameo). And yes, it's derivative and woefully cheap. But there's nothing else even vaguely reminiscent of the D'Amato touch - no nudity, no depravity, not even any real gore to speak of. Under the direction of Fabrizio Laurenti (again under the pseudonym "Martin Newlin", as in WITCHERY, 1989), CRAWLERS is at least more matchable than TROLL 2, but it remains an impoverished embarrassment compared to other recent 1950s sf revisions like TREMORS, TICKS, or, hell, even SKEETER! This tepid shit is inoffensive, but give me D'Amato's glory days, where his exploitative opportunism was at the very least in-your-face aggressive. "Gimme that old-time religion..."

GIALLO A VENEZIA (1979)
(aka GORE IN VENICE)
Directed by Mario Landi
Reviewed by Bob Sargent

"A festival of killings!" - a line uttered by one of the characters in the film-- is an apt description for this Italian shocker, which ranks among the nastiest I've seen. Half of the time, this extraordinarily violent and simultaneously perverse flick reminded me of one of sultry Sylvia Kristel's Emmanuelle movies. A pretty young woman, at the urging of her voyeuristic husband, takes on all comers of amorous intent. The rest of the running time is devoted to the polizia giving chase to a killer (a balding fellow who wears mirrored sunglasses at all times [even at night]) who is committing some unbelievably grisly murders. When he isn't

knifing a \$10 prostitute in the crotch, he's calmly sawing a helpless victim's legs off to stuff her in a refrigerator. No off-camera stuff here, these disquieting sequences are presented in unapologetically graphic detail.

The narrative is circular, opening and closing on the same crime scene. The camera glides over the dead bodies of a young couple (Fabio and Flavia, the aforementioned husband and wife deviants) who appear to have been the victims of foul play. Berto Pisano's incongruously playful musical track -complete with the obligatory bizarre vocals-blasts you out of your seat as the opening credits roll. Flashbacks reveal the husband (Gianni Dei; he's the thief who got shot during a botched jewelry store robbery in GLI ASSASSINI SONO NOSTRI OSPITI [THE KILLERS ARE OUR GUESTS]) to be a sicko who gets off on humiliating his wife (whipping her bare bottom, inviting perverts to paw her in porn theaters, screwing her in a boathouse while another youth watches) at every available opportunity. When Fabio's not reading pornographic literature (which at one point inspires him to saunter into the laundry room, grab his paramour from behind, bend her over the dryer and... well, need I really go on?), he is coaching Flavia to corrupt innocent delivery boys while he watches the action (safely hidden from view). A sexual adventuress she is not-made painfully obvious by her clumsy attempts at seduction-as Flavia's embarrassed quarry keeps it in his pants and departs.

Amid waterborne stock footage of unmistakable landmarks such as the Palazzo Ducale- to remind us we are in Venice (the choice of location appears to be completely arbitrary)- enters Marzia (curvaceous Maria Angela Giordan) who is implicated in wrongdoing due to her possessing some compromising photos of the murdered couple and the aforementioned prostitute that were confiscated by the cops. It turns out that Marzia was a close friend of Flavia's-they grew up together-and when a detective reveals to her Fabio's cocaine addiction, Marzia relates to him just how peculiar the young man really was. Of

course, Marzia is hardly as pure as the driven snow herself. In fact, she even looks cheap, and in one scene, she demonstrates an unusual Italian mating ritual with her lowlife boyfriend Marco who slaps her around (foreplay?) and then proceeds to fuck her every which way but loose. This scene is made even more disturbing by the presence of the drooling killer who is watching their wild, near-hardcore acrobatics through a window (voyeurism being a recurrent theme here). The stud steps out for a smoke, only to be shot and unceremoniously doused with gasoline by the peeping psycho who immediately torches him. He dies noisily (and picturesquely). Returning for Marzia, the killer ropes her naked form to the kitchen table and in the picture's most unconscionably gruesome sequence slowly hacks her legs off (even stopping to slap her awake when she passes out)!

Almost equally abhorrent was the way the detective in charge of the investigation-named De Paul-was continuously stuffing his face with hard-boiled eggs throughout the entire film. Hardly something to enhance a tough-guy image (much needed in this instance, as the fellow playing the part is too young and boyish-looking to be taken seriously [this angle was played off of in the film for laughs]). De Paul obsesses endlessly about a pair of scissors used in the murder, and -right on cue- a red-herring is provided in the form of Flavia's old flame, a German artist named Bruno who has picked an inopportune time to make the implement a favorite motif in his work.

The killer -Andre, a student who was obsessed with Marzia to the point of making threatening phone calls- is finally apprehended in a non-spectacular fashion and the picture resolves itself with what turns out to be a murder/suicide that he had nothing to do with. Fabio gets his comeuppance when poor Flavia, having had her fill of her husband's rape-filled fantasies (and having just been royally abused by two happy-go-lucky dock workers for posing as a prostitute), sticks him like a pig with a pair of scissors and then does herself in. Don't you just love happy endings?

Holder of a law degree, Mario Landi must have been a late-starter in the world of cinema (compared to many of his contemporaries who began under the wing of some mentor). A far cry from the film we're discussing here, his first feature was made in 1951; a musical (!) called *Canzoni per le strade* (literally Songs for the Road). Similar productions followed until the Italian horror boom of the '70s and '80s when Landi switched gears. Oftentimes conveniently labeled as a television director, the well-rounded Landi's background includes stints in radio and theater as well. With *Giallo a Venezia*, Landi pulls out all the stops and delivers a no-holds-barred portrait of unparalleled misogyny. Most of the performances by the cast are chillingly convincing, and make the on-screen murders all the more difficult to watch. Curiously, none of Landi's other works seem to exhibit the ferocity so vividly on display here (*PATRICK VIVA ANCORA* [*PATRICK LIVES AGAIN*] being the only one that comes close).

Don't hold your breath waiting for an English-dubbed version to surface, as *Giallo a Venezia* will probably never see a release on a major U.S. home video label. Go for the subtitled print [available thru Video Search of Miami]. It's worth seeking out -at the very least as a vicious example of just how far some of these thrillers could go- but be warned. . . this is definitely NOT one to watch when your grandmother or the kiddies are around. Hit "play" and shut the door.

**FAREWELL UNCLE TOM (1971)
(aka UNCLE TOM)**

**Directed by Gualtiero Jacopetti
and Franco Prosperi**

Reviewed by Travis Crawford

Despite the fact that it's an undeniably mesmerizing, jaw-dropping viewing experience, I'm pretty reluctant to wholeheartedly recommend *Farewell Uncle Tom*, a mondo-styled "documentary" on Civil War-era slavery in America from the team of Jacopetti and Prosperi, who previously utilized this sensationalistic genre to exploit other cultures

in MONDO CANE and AFRICA BLOOD AND GUTS. It's not that I don't find their film shamefully compelling—I just don't want my fascination for the film to be mistaken as enthusiasm for its content. Simply put, Uncle Tom is one of the most horrifyingly offensive films I've ever seen, a ready candidate for the Salo/Cannibal Holocaust cinema pantheon of nausea, and an unending mondo cornucopia of racial atrocities that makes the notorious Fight For Your Life look like a plea for harmonious integration. It's also a lavish and surreal epic that, at its best, is a savage critique of American imperialism and capitalist domination—that is, when it's not physically unwatchable (it's often both in the same scene).

The concept is one-note: Jacopetti and Prosperi, as modern-day filmmakers, travel back in time to America just after the Civil War, and conduct a study of the now-illegal transfer and ownership of black slaves in the South (oddly, they also travel in automobiles and helicopters, and sport digital watches; the absurdity of these details in 19th-century America is never commented upon, although the ridiculousness is surely intentional). There follows no "story" or progression, as such—simply a series of setpieces depicting the suffering of blacks at the hands of their "masters", as they are whipped, sold, castrated, raped, force-fed with hammers and funnels, given group enemas by veterinarians, hosed down with disinfectant, fed en masse from troughs of grue (with one amputee using his stump as a spoon; nice, guys...), branded, hunted, subjected to medical experiments, tossed into breeding farms, and in one sequence of unspeakable weirdness-fondled by "The General," a hyperactive, whip-toting, top-hat-clad Black dwarf pimp with a gift for dance instruction. This is turn-away-from-the-screen stuff, kids—a gutter history of American fascism given vomit-colored life by moments of nightmarish racial cruelty (one scene of black infants being violently yanked away from their mothers is truly unbearable), and an expansive epic scope that uses distorted wide-screen photography and Fellini-esque tableau, to give you the feeling you're watching a Roots-Meets-

irth of a Nation hybrid joint-directed by Ken Russell and David Duke.

An equal share of the film's overlong (a full two hours) running time is devoted to Jacopetti and Prosperi interviewing the bloated redneck crackers that hold the whips, as they luxuriate around their Southern mansions and plantations and explain in detail the innate inferiority of the Black race, citing "limited cranial capacity" and lobbying for compulsory sterilization. All the while, our intrepid Italians cite volumes of genuine historical documents to verify their "recreations" (inaccuracies are still present, unsurprisingly), whilst a Gone With the Wind-number of extras cavort in the Mississippi and Louisiana countryside (the film was shot on location, and I couldn't help wondering how the hell they got performers to appear in this horror-show). My favorite shot in the film is of a little white girl and a little black boy running in soft-focus slow-motion up a grassy hill—the picture of apparent racial harmony—until they reach the peak, and we now see she is leading him by a chain around his neck.

This material is indescribably nasty and barbaric, and-surreal and excessive visual style or not-would make for a pointless, monotonous film if Jacopetti and Prosperi ended it there. They do not. The ending has to be seen to be believed, as we're hurled into a staggering contemporary epilogue in which a black radical in priest garb and massive Afro strolls through an ultra-modern, honky-packed American metropolis, reading excerpts from the slave-era Confessions of Nat Turner and fantasizing about Manson-styled massacres of white families, slaughtered with ketchup-covered glee in their beds, clean kitchens, freshly mowed lawns. Babies are picked up and thrown against the wall by would-be Eldridge Cleavers, all to the homastic heats of Riz Ortolani's amazing score (half Dixieland jaunts, half power-trio psychedelia). As the camera tracks through the decaying remnants of once-grand Southern mansions and the radio voice-overs broadcast news of race riots, Jacopetti and Prosperi's over-simplified (though crudely accurate) political intentions are thrown into sharp relief:

a particularly European naivete which translates into "Now it's time for master to take it up the ass!". Maybe this film isn't so far removed from Spike Lee's body of work, after all...

What were these people thinking? Were Jacopetti and Prosperi so blinded by their lavishly lurid imagery and attempts at razor-sharp satire that they were unable to see their own exploitation of the black performers in the film (my amazement at what some of these black Americans would subject themselves to for this film was answered by the end credits-the actors playing slaves were apparently all Haitians, and some of the film was shot there; one of the few laughs I had throughout the film was when I saw 'Papa Doc' Duvalier thanked in the closing crawl-the irony of making a film about slavery under his regime was probably lost on the filmmakers)? Indeed, perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Farewell Uncle Tom is that the film itself often mirrors the same lack of consideration for the black slaves as human beings, that is demonstrated by the slave-owners the film claims to criticize! This is illustrated not only in the sheer barbaric physical reality of the events being recreated for the film, but also in the filmmakers' view of blacks as one common, faceless (and largely imbecilic) animal mass; one of the only blacks given an individual, intelligent voice is revealed to be a real Uncle Tom who claims he likes slavery. I'd make a defense that Jacopetti and Prosperi were attempting to echo the mentality of the period, if it weren't for several other questionable moments of misjudgment-in one scene, one of the directors molests a 13-year-old virgin slave (with a whip!)-and they're going to lecture us? Farewell Uncle Tom truly is the ultimate exploitation film-in the truest sense of the word.

But admittedly-this morally confused ambiguity only adds to the guilty enjoyment one derives from this grotesque spectacle. I confess: I liked Farewell Uncle Tom (I feel like that comment will come back to haunt me someday), and as difficult as it often is to sit through, I cannot deny it is still memorable viewing, and clearly one of the most incredible exploitation

films ever made. Although its Scope framing is regrettably cropped, VSoM's unearthing of this lost Mondo masterwork-obtained from a private collector outside the country-is one of their more important finds of late. As a hellish journey through the howls of this country's history, it's also a joyously spiteful kick-in-the-face to your average Dixie-flag-waving jingoist Anglophile asshole. It's also one of the most entertaining videos to loan unsuspecting fellow trash film buffs, to witness their disgusted reaction-just don't tote it to the next NAACP meeting.

Maya (1988)

Directed by Marcello Avallone

Reviewed by Louis Paul

Marcello Avallone's bizarre, eccentric, South American Indian mythology horror film makes for a very interesting viewing experience, one that definitely differs from much of the ETC-type of movie often reviewed in these pages. With the aid of Gabrielle Ducros' gorgeous score, an incredible tapestry of sound that at times, if it can, evokes more mood than the director's stylish visuals can provide, 'Maya' is truly a different kind of Italian horror film.

Opening with a quote from famed author and LSD shaman, Carlos Castaneda- "Light Is The Fracture Between The Worlds", this exceedingly strange movie jump starts with William Berger experiencing a horrible nightmare, awakening in a feverish sweat, driving deep into the jungle to the site of an Inca pyramid (set in Peru, the film was shot in Venezuela), where he encounters a ghostly wild-haired, feral hoy on a misty, fog-heavy mountain overpass. Berger's car seems to run over the feral child and, when he looks beneath his car, he is slashed by some kind of a beast creature. In a panic and completely disoriented, he climbs the steps to the pyramid where an unseen force plunges a blade deep into his chest. The scene fades out to two lovers (one a Caucasian male, the other a South American female) making sweaty, feverish love in a sparsely-furnished shack.

Avallone films most of the movies' erotic love-making scenes as if the actors and actresses

(all seeming to be refugees from some South American Penthouse Magazine photo shoots), truly enjoyed wallowing in un-self conscious nudity. The casting department sought out and have hired the prettiest, shapely South American actresses to make the film something special to watch for connoisseurs of extreme nudity.

Back to the story at hand. It seems that Berger's character was an archaeologist/anthropologist (which is never clearly explained) who was investigating some ancient myth involving a tribal chief's revenge that seemed to span centuries. Apparently, in order to further experience the Indian "mystique" of legends, he indulged in some sort of supernatural group seances with the local shaman (who is also the local coroner) and your average everyday American adventurer.

It's the adventurer character that the movie seems to focus on after the death of Berger in the opening credits. His name is Peter (played by Peter Phelps, according to the credits). He is from the United States and is some sort of part-time underwater archeologist, part-time worker in the local bar/restaurant and screws anything that walks on two legs, and he does all this walking through the entire film in dirty clothes and in an apparent alcoholic stupor.

The people in the village live on the edge of poverty and here is where we are introduced to a whole plethora of other characters like the failed American businessman who married a South American hombshell and who is slowly drinking himself into oblivion while his wife screws all of the handsome young hunks when he's out cold! Cockfights and bare-handed battles are staged for entertainment for the locals. We even see our young anti-bero visit one such local establishment where two hehemoths lunge at each other before one rips off the other's fingers causing a great whoosh of blood to spurt forth...what fun these South Americans have!

One of the most unlikable leads that I've seen in a while, this Peter character soon becomes upstaged by the arrival of Berger's daughter (Mariella Valtenini) to investigate the death of

her father. An apparent jet setter from New York (actually a running joke throughout the film appears whenever this character brings up the fact that she's from New York). Does the director want to reinforce the fact that this is South America? You bet! But it becomes a constant irritant when this flighty actress, keeps rattling off "I'm from New York, you know?"...God, I kept hoping that the unseen force, promised at the films' opening, can make a reappearance and make her the next victim.

A visit to the local morgue introduces us to the coroner/shaman person mentioned above (actually, one of the movie's nicer characters) and to the fact that Berger was ceremonially butchered and not just merely stabbed to death. The local police are powerless (or just refuse) to investigate much further, even when the rumors that other similar deaths had occurred in the past. About this point into this film is when things take a strange, brutal turn. Two young American punk kids travel into town, get drunk, slander one of Peter's girlfriends, make a stink at the local bar and try to rape (a brief, but nasty, powerful scene) the female gas station attendant (Peter's lover). She flees into the night but these two idiots follow her, thinking that she's run into the gas station. These drunkards deserve everything they get when one of them is killed by some unseen force that causes him to die from a blow to the head and the other, from repeated crushes from some "invisible" driver of the van.

The fact that this movie is one strange film becomes quite apparent when, instead of the investigations into the (possible) murders by our anti-hero or others, we just spend more screen time watching this guy drink, make endless passes on Berger's daughter and just be a schmuck. Finally, as the Mexican 'Day Of The Dead' approaches (wait a minute, wasn't this obviously the South American jungle?), all of the town people and those from local villages prepare to make the pilgrimage to the Incan pyramid (seen at the beginning of the film) to celebrate the ancient battles between warring Indian tribes of Incas and Mayans (that also makes up some of the films' bizarre mytho-

mythology). For some reason that escapes me, the unseen force attacks the bar/restaurant owner's slut of a wife in the form of one of her lovers (just moments after she blows him off and tells him she's gonna' try to be faithful to her husband). She survives, runs from his hoathouse and races in her car towards the bar. At the bar, the walls shake, things crash to the floor and the husband's nerves become mightily rattled. Out of some unnamable fear, he picks up a large blade for protection only to thrust it into the belly of his wife who surprises him when she comes running into the bar in the dark.

On the 'Day Of The Dead', Peter finally tells Berger's daughter of the experiments that he shared with the late man, under the tutelage of the local shaman, but refuses to tell her who the shaman really is and what horror might be the cause for all of the deaths. As the townspeople gather at the base of the Inca pyramid, a young boy climbs the long stone steps to the top where a planned re-enactment of an ancient rite is to be staged. It is here that the 'real' spirit of the great, long-dead Indian chief will make his reappearance before many witnesses,

and claim another victim in his endless revenge plan. Berger's daughter attends the ritual. Meanwhile, our anti-hero and the shaman stare into a glass mirror on a table as all hell breaks loose when they attempt to gain a psychic passage into another relativity or dimension.

Definitely not the usual paranoiac thriller or suspenseful giallo. With this film, the director, Marcello Avallone, attempts to bring something different, if not entirely new and unseen, to the audience. By peopling his film with a largely unlikeable cast of characters, he leaves no one for the viewer to root for. By shooting the film in often arty, MTV-style camera angles and often using attractive women in steamy sex scenes, he's apparently trying to cover a lot of ground. The "unseen force" that causes many deaths throughout is a very interesting cinematic idea that we've seen countless times before. But here, the promised integration of mythology, legend and real-life horror never seems to fully merge to a satisfying conclusion. Like Monty Python said - "and now for something completely different"... only they probably weren't thinking of 'Maya' as a perfect example of that catchy little phrase.

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EURO CRIME

a collection of reviews
by **STEVE FENTONE**

THE FALLING MAN

The first thing you notice is the catchy garage R&R theme-song, "I Just Can't Stand It No More" (music by spaghetti vet Robby Poitevin), which was originally heard in Franco Prosperi's *TECNICA DI UN OMICIDIO* / "Technique of a Murder" (aka *HIRED KILLER*, 1967). The second thing you notice is that longtime bad dude Henry Silva is playing the hero for once (he went on to portray criminals in a great number of Euro crime films).

Seldom have distributors so earnestly sought to camouflage the origins of a foreign film! *THE FALLING MAN* (original title *QUELLA CAROGNA DELL'ISPELTTORE STERLING* / "That Swine Inspector Sterling", 1968) was released in the US in 1971 by Heritage Films. Judging by thoroughly Anglicized cast and

credits - director "Hal Brady" aka "Billy Michaels" is in reality Emilio Miraglia - a blatant attempt was made to pass it off as homegrown American product, both 'Stateside and in its land of origin. Car chases around authentic San Francisco locations indicate it may have been a cash-in on Steve McQueen's trendsetting *BULLITT*. Stylish, atmospheric airborne camerawork establishes the location, but in spite of famous SF landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, the *look* and *feel* - not to mention occasional brutal violence - of *THE FALLING MAN* is Continental all the way (interiors were lensed in Rome). Even Flower Power music and behind-the-scenes peeks at the LSD-drenched Haight Ashbury hippy subculture fail to conceal *THE FALLING MAN*'s cultural roots.

The clever framework of this *policier* has Silva being gunned down within the first five minutes. As his body crumples to the ground (hence the US title), the film kicks into extreme slow-motion, virtually freezing his death in time and space. The remainder of the narrative is interspersed with shots of Silva falling nearer and nearer to the ground. While dramatically rather slow-moving, *THE FALLING MAN* is unusual enough structurally to warrant a look-see by devotees of both the Italian gangster and *giallo* genres. The soundtrack includes a discordant melange of harsh electronic tonalities.

Sandwiched by fleeting glimpses of the falling body are flashbacks to events immediately preceding his death. Inspector Sterling (Silva) is a cop whose son is accidentally killed during a drive-by mob shooting. Sterling finds himself charged with the murder of a police informant named Rocky after he has interrupted criminals in the commission of a factory robbery (the murder via bullet to the head is rather graphic for the time). When the real culprits perjure themselves in court, Sterling is implicated and quickly becomes an ex-cop. Sterling tracks down Rocky's real murderers while attempting to clear his besmirched name.

The rudimentary plot is lifted from spaghetti westerns, especially evident in haunting aerial views of a vast cemetery, and in a scene where Silva practices quick-drawing his snubnose .38 Special from its hip holster. Silva's sinewy Latin looks and intense, close-set eyes destined him for typecasting in villainous roles. Considering he plays a violent rogue policeman here, the casting choice is not unsuitable. Silva's sullen character, from the era of macho spaghetti antiheroes, prefigures the above the law exploits of top '70s Italo-cops like Maurizio Merli.

Silva's treacherous love interest comes in the form of a mob-affiliated fashion model named Janet (Beba Loncar, a blonde Tuesday Weld type who asks, "Wanna know how many men I've had?"). Silva's bureaucratic foil is Commissioner Donald (Keenan Wynn, who, as in other Italo-film appearances, is dubbed with another actor's voice). Once the real killer has

been apprehended, the final frame freezes on Silva's downed corpse at last coming to rest.

Certain erroneous Euro sources list Anglicized director "Brady" as being Alfonso Brescia. Kittenish Beba Loncar went on to such obscure Ital crime films as Giuseppe Vari's *TERZA IPOTESI SU UN CASO DI PERFETTA STRATEGIA CRIMINALE* / aka *WHO KILLED THE PROSECUTOR, AND WHY?* (1972). Eurotrash regulars Pier Paolo Capponi and Luciano Rossi appear under their respective pseudonyms, "Paul Carey" and "Edward G. Ross".

GANGSTERS

C: Antonio Sabato, Max Delva, Giampiero Albertini, Gino Milli, Dagmar Lassander, Marilda Dona

Originally entitled *RITORNANO QUELLI DELLA CALIBRO 38* / 'The Return of the 38 Special Squad' (1977), this is possibly an unofficial follow-up to Massimo Dallamano's *QUELLI DELLA CALIBRO 38* (1976). Even before the credits roll, a topless nightclub dancer rubs wine all over her tits. Then, a bomb goes off. A thwarted hold-up leaves an innocent bystander dead, and hardboiled cops chase the getaway car on a motorcycle. A series of cold-blooded gangland rubouts occurs. The main plot deals with the *piazza*'s formation of a special "Anti-Racket Squad" to combat mob extortion and protection rackets. The anti-racketeers - led by no-bullshit Inspector Gino Barelli (hardass regular Antonio Sabato) - put the pressure on, and mob boss Don Carnivale quickly orders the elimination of any associates who might incriminate him.

There are enough inventive plot developments, as well as arson, assault and battery, footchases and slug matches to keep a Euro crime aficionado happier'n a pig in shit. The nasty climax unfolds in a school surrounded by a SWAT team, where the cornered mobsters make hostages of a teacher and her young pupils (the school marm gets a bullet in the head and is unceremoniously dumped from a second-storey window!). Fittingly reckless police vigilante tactics round

out this fast-paced and unapologetically trashy scenario. Possesses a similar grubby street-smart feel as *ROMA VIOLENTA* and Lenzi's policemen, and is unusually talky, but tolerably dubbed.

The transfer is fine, but the print is rather poorly panned-and-scanned. This often eliminates large portions of the action, including much of *signora* Lassander's obligatory topless scene (she straps on Sabato's shoulder bolster across her boobs). As Rosie, the redheaded streetwalker/astrologer with the denim blue bedroom eyes, Lassander provides our hero's disposable wham-bam-thankyou-ma'am love interest.

"Warren"/Vari also directed the crime film, *TERZA IPOTESI SU UN CASO DI PERFETTA STRATEGIA CRIMINALE* / aka *WHO KILLED THE PROSECUTOR AND WHY?* (1972). Sabato made numerous Eurocrime appearances on both sides of the law, including *L'UOMO DAGLI OCCHI DI GHIACCIO* and *NAPOLI...LA CAMORRA SFIDA, LA CITTA RISPONDE*. Later Europorn cocksman "Rick"/Rik Battaglia is also on hand, as is perpetual poor man's Peter Lorre, "Alan Collins" (aka Luciano Pigozzi) as a seedy dope pusher/police informant.

GANG WAR IN MILAN

This was among Umberto Lenzi's earliest '70s crime mellers, originally entitled *MILANO ROVENTE* (1973). Compared to his later, faster paced crimeslimers, *GANG WAR* is at best passable (English dubbing and letterboxing would be definite plusses).

Big-time Milan pimp and syndicate boss Sabato (in a convincingly smirky, toothsome performance) finds a cheap blonde floating dead in his expensive indoor swimming pool. Sabato leeringly "auditions" a prospective new recruit booker by forcing her to strip topless and pose in sheer black lingerie.

Henchmen of his rival crimeboss/pimp (the suave but treacherous looking Leroy, one of whose flunkies is a struttin' soul brother with an Afro and cool shades) attempt to drown a disobedient hooker in an aquarium. A massed *polizia* raid on prostitute row nets a large bail

of "working girls", in a crackdown to undermine Sabato and Leroy's rival whore operations.

A car bomb fails to kill Leroy, who in retaliation dispatches a hit squad to beat, rob and generally harass Sabato's girls. In a motel room, a bare breasted whore is whipped across her quivering pantied buttocks by a hoodlum's belt; women are assaulted and slashed across the face with stilettos (presumably to lower their "market value"?). By merely snapping his fingers, Sabato plies his powerful "business associates" with high-priced liquor and ladies. Despite his callous maltreatment of the prostitutes, he manages to find a love interest in Jasmine (Marisa Mell).

During a hearty sing-song at a dinner celebration, Sabato calmly orders his bullyboys to garrot a traitorous associate in the washroom. Leroy's drug and whoring operations are sabotaged, his employees killed. At roadside, a prominent Milanese bood and his wife are gunned down. While in the hospital, the critically wounded gangster's I.V. is disconnected by a hitman; who then blows into the tube, killing the patient instantly via air bubbles to his bloodstream. Elsewhere in the sadistic violence area, one of Sabato's loyal men is tortured with bare electrical wires applied to his (out-of-frame) dick.

Sabato and his flunkies later burst in on Leroy, catching him in bed with a gay drag queen wearing a blonde Marilyn wig and lacy black undies. The intruding gangsters proceed to cast aspersions on Leroy's manhood and beat up the cross-dressing callboy (one guy plants a ball-crushing handlock on the guy's bag). Another hood is smothered by pillow and dumped in the river.

A shaky truce is eventually called between the rival factions: until fickle Jasmine skips town with Leroy. "Putana! Putana!" ("Bitch! Bitch!") Sabato curses, gesticulating wildly in overbeaten Italian passion. In appearance, Sabato is not unlike his crimeslime colleague Maurizio Merli, except the former's thespian style is more intense and physical. While his technical acting range is perhaps more varied, Sabato's *aura* has far more immediately villainous connotations,

whereas Merli's one-track, iron-jawed cops always met the requirements of right wing pulp "heroes". Sabato evades police capture and steals a *polizia* patrolcar. Upon discovery of Leroy's corpse, he soon learns that it is his supposed trusted confidants who are responsible for the treachery within his organization. For the downbeat ending, upon Sabato's receipt of a whole clip of M16 slugs, his criminal empire comes crashing down around him. *MILANO ROVENTE* is a must-see Italcineslime, simply because it's a Lenzi film. Carlo Rustichelli's smoky sax riffs add a more sombre musical tone than the usual loud funk-rock of the period.

Supporting actor Franco Fantasia also served as assistant director on the film. Not to be confused with Pasquale Squitieri's *CAMORRA* (1972), which was released in English as *GANG WAR IN NAPLES*.

ROMA VIOLENTA

Maurizio Merli does his usual macho cop routine, this time as a *polizia* commissioner, Inspector Betti, in the title metropolis commanding a crack undercover unit (formed of assorted post-hippy detectives who model themselves after Pacino's *SERPICO*). Yep, it's the familiar "special police squad" scenario yet again.

To ensure that justice is served, Merli is not averse to employing strongarm tactics. When it's attached to Merli's shoulder, the proverbial "long arm of the law" invariably comes equipped with a mean right hook and an itchy trigger finger. At his precinct, police brutality is a marketable job skill. Turning blind eyes to his unorthodox policing methods are Merli's superior officers (played by reliable crimeslime regulars, Richard Conte and Silvano Tranquilli).

A botched armed hijack of a public transit bus results in an innocent young man's murder. Motorcycle bandits mug a woman pedestrian (obviously a stuntman in drag). In retaliation, the *polizia* employ a decoy cop dressed as an old biddy to apprehend these mobile purse-snatchers. A motorcyclist is side-swiped head-on into the path of a truck approaching in the opposite lane (*crunch*). An armed holdup at a

supermarket ends with a housewife hostage being unceremoniously dumped from the robbers' speeding getaway car. Merli's young colleague is gunned down - and consequently crippled - during a bank job. Rather than clog up the overworked judicial system with extra paperwork, following a frenetic auto pursuit Merli shoots the offending gunman down in cold blood. With his hand-picked undercover squad, Merli meets the mob on its home turf for some informal plainclothes harassment. Whenever crooks dare to raise their unlawful heads, the anti-gang squad swoops down to administer a sound thrashing upside them.

The syndicate reacts by invading the police chief's home, beating up his middle-aged housekeeper and raping Conte's daughter (Giordano) right in front of him. Other than some mandatory bared boobs and a suitably "horrified" reaction shot from Conte, this unsavoury plot detail is mercifully not dwelled upon. In answer, Merli's mob beat the two criminals responsible with official police-issue knuckledusters and baseball bats. A swank *ristorante* is then invaded by bandits who relieve the rich clientele of their valuables. But the final straw comes when mobsters beat Merli's paralyzed wheelchair-bound colleague, stomping his spine and doing a two-step on his kidneys. In contempt, Merli shoots the two cowardly criminals (in the back, yet!).

The tricky ending'll keep you guessing. In conclusion, *ROMA VIOLENTA* is fast-paced, no-frills prime crimeslime. *SPECIAL COP IN ACTION* was the film's proposed foreign export title. It never received English-language theatrical release in the US, but is *in esse* under that title on Venezuelan cassette (on Britvid it's called *FORCED IMPACT*). Supporting actor John Steiner, who plays a bank robber, went on to guest star in Mario Caiano's similarly-entitled *MILANO VIOLENTA* / "VIOLENT MILAN" (1976). Bit-part Daniela Giordano is also in *VIOLENT OFFENDER*. Martinelli also made *ROMA, L'ALTRA FACIA DELLA VIOLENZA* / "ROME, THE OTHER FACE OF VIOLENCE" (1976), with Marcel Bozzuffi and "Anthony Steffen"/Antonio de Teffe.

CARMEN RUSSO

by DAN PYDYNKOWSKI



Carmen Russo? Many ETC readers probably have never heard of her as she didn't appear in a lot of films during her career, most of which have not been dubbed into English, and the majority of them have been sexy comedies. Not the greatest of actresses, Russo rose to fame because of her incredible body: big boobs, a slim waist, long legs, and a great ass (combining to make her 41D-27-39 figure), and she had no problems showing it off. Besides her movie career, she gained much popularity

appearing on various television programs (often dancing in tiny bikinis, she also displayed those same skills in her films) and was a very popular nude model in several men's magazines like PLAYMEN (which once included a life-size poster of her) and GIN FIZZ (which ran articles about whether her breasts were real or fake).

Born on October 3, 1959, in Genoa, Italy to a policeman father and a cinema cashier mother, Carmen Russo was thrust into the

public eye when she won the Miss Teenage Italy contest in 1972. Amazingly, she was only 13 years-old when she won the title, becoming the youngest Miss Teen Italy ever. After winning the Miss Liguria (the region in Italy that surrounds Genoa) title, she entered the 1974 Miss Italy pageant as "Miss Emilia", but was disqualified when her young age was discovered. But this didn't deter Carmen as, in 1977, she won the Miss World International title in Venezuela. As with other "beauty-queens-turned-startlets" (such as Gloria Guida, Miss Teenage Italy 1974 and Lilli Carati, Miss Italy 1975), she soon turned her attention towards an acting career.

In 1976, Russo had a nude cameo at the beginning of UN'OMBRA NELL'OMBRA (RING OF DARKNESS), playing a dancer who does a sexy dance for Satan. A strong gust of wind blows her dress off and she dances erotically in a red G-string with a male dancer. The OMEN-esque plot deals with cultist Anne Heyward trying to control her evil, demon-sired hell-child Lara Wendel. This film may have been re-released at a later date to capitalize on Russo's success as she's given the credit "...And the extraordinary participation of Carmen Russo" (despite her brief, non-speaking role). Soon, she was appearing on various private TV-station's shows, often as a bikini-clad dancer or hostess.

Russo made an incredible debut in 1978's LE PORNO KILLERS, playing a hustly, sex-hungry killer who goes after double-crossing scumbag Vassilli Karis. Her partner is Cinzia Lodetti, a blonde (and equally hustly) beauty who played one of the lesbian prisoners in ESCAPE (aka ESCAPE FROM HELL) in 1979. The film plays like a "sexed-up" Andy Sidaris movie, only with much more nudity and less violence. The minimal plot is just an excuse for the 5 long nude/sex scenes that take up much of the film's running time. Russo and Lodetti get naked and have sex at every opportunity: first with their boyfriends before they leave to find Karis, then with 2 guys after the 2 sexbombs beat the shit out of them on the beach, and finally, have a threesome with Karis

after they kidnap him. The best scene finds Lodetti and Russo in a lesbian scene in a hotel room's shower, where they lovingly wash, fondle, and kiss each other. In the film's only "gratuitous" nude scene, the 2 women strip to their panties so they can dance and frolic in a stream. In some prints of LE PORNO KILLERS, hardcore inserts were expertly added to the 3 hetero-sex scenes. And maybe because of this, Russo used the pseudonym of "Carmen Bizet". An astonishing debut and definitely her best film.

In addition to becoming CANALE 5 TV's "mascot" on their show POPCORN in 1979, Russo also had a small role in LA CITTA DELLE DONNE and a "blink and you'll miss her" cameo at the end of L'INFERMIERA NELLA CORSIA DEI MILITARI, playing a nude model. This typical comedy concerns the misadventures of the patients and staff of a military psychiatric hospital. The film features a



great cast (often found in these types of comedies): Lino Banfi as the hospital's wacky doctor, Susan Scott as his nymphomaniac wife, Alvaro Vitali as a crazy artist, Karin Schubert as an art thief, and Nadia Cassini stars as a cop going undercover posing as a sexy nurse to find a stolen painting.

Russo's only foray into the horror genre (not counting her cameo in UN'OMBRA NELL'OMBRA) came in 1980, playing a politician's amorous wife in PATRICK VIVE ANCORA. Mario Landi's pseudo-sequel to 1978's PATRICK tells the sleazy tale of comatose Patrick (Gianni Dei) who unleashes his murderous psychic powers on a group of people at his father's resort-clinic. Carmen has a couple of nude scenes, over-acts when her husband is found boiled in the swimming pool, and gets decapitated via a car window. Her best scene is a brief cat fight between her and Maria Angela Giordan(o). The drunken, and nearly nude, Giordan instigates the brawl by saying Russo "took it up the ass" to further her husband's political career, at which point they attack each other, Russo loses her skirt, and they have to be pulled apart from one another.

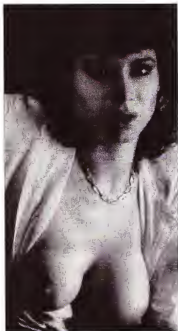
Russo was back in a small role in LA SETTIMANABIANCA, playing a promiscuous maid who sleeps with some vacationing old men at a ski resort. Annamaria Rizzoli stars and the clichéd plot has all the men trying to get into her pants or see her naked. Russo's role is pretty basic: strip out of her uniform and bop into bed, but she livens up the proceedings when ever she does it. Another "Settimana" film was made with Rizzoli, LA SETTIMANA AL MARE, which takes place at a beach resort, but Russo is not in it and is sorely missed.

After PLAYMEN christened her the "Most Beautiful Woman in the World" in 1981, she starred in LA MAESTRA...DI SCI, playing a PLAYMEN model! Much like LA SETTIMANA BIANCA, this film takes place at a ski resort where Russo goes to get away from her photographer boyfriend. Missing negatives, blackmail, Arabs, sexy sheik swindlers, Russo in sexy clothes, and lots of skiing hijinks ensue. She also had a worthless cameo (but got 3rd

billing) in CIAO NEMICO (ODD SQUAD), a lame World War 2 comedy about 2 opposing groups of misfit soldiers (led by Giuliano Gemma and Johnny Dorelli) guarding a bridge. Russo shows up for 2 seconds as a prostitute, showing her cleavage and saying "Bravo" as a muscular soldier poses for her. Her briefest role and it's her only film dubbed into English.

A year later she was again playing a prostitute in BUENA COME IL PANE, but this time in the lead role. Russo, looking better than ever because her dark brown hair is dyed to a reddish-brown, plays a working girl who acts out men's fantasies, playing a nun, a leather-clad biker, a soldier, a geisha, and a sexy (but innocent) school girl. An astronomy-loving but very klutzy nerd falls in love with her and spends most of his time chasing her around. Russo has a lot of topless/nude scenes (including in the bath and some stripping), but the best one has her playing Sleeping Beauty (in a long blonde wig) and she just lays on a bed, fully nude, and the camera just lingers on her great body.

She worked again with Nadia Cassini in GIOVANI, BELLE... PROBABILMENTE RICCHE and along with Marilyn Monroe look-a-like (and German porn star) Olivia Link (aka Olinka), they play women who have comical misadventures, often involving their lovers. Cassini plays a sexually repressed musician, Link's a sexy pharmacist, and Russo cheats on her husband, who nearly catches her in the act every time. Despite being directed by Michele Massimo Tarantini (a veteran of sexy comedies), the film is very tame in the nudity department, but all 3 actresses are shown frequently in sexy lingerie, especially during the finale which takes place in a hotel. Russo also re-teamed with Alvaro Vitali in PAOLO ROBERTO COITECHINO, CENTRAVANTI DI SFONDAMENTO (1983). Vitali plays a dual role: a famous, afro-sporting soccer player and a dim-witted plumber, who change places during a kidnapping attempt. Carmen plays the famous Vitali's flamenco-dancer girlfriend, not given much to do except looking good (and dancing) in skimpy bikinis.



Around this time Russo was also doing a lot of TV work, mostly for CANALE 5, which led her to be dubbed the "Uncontested Queen on CANALE 5". She became quite popular when she appeared in shows and specials like *DRIVE-IN*, *GRAND HOTEL*, and *UN FANTASTICO TRAGICO VENERDI*. She continued to appear in movies, but they became less and less as her TV career took off. Russo had a supporting role as Pierina (Marina Marfoglio's prostitute sister in *QUELLA PESTE DI PIERINA*).

This film is a lame, female rip-off of Alvaro Vitali's popular *PIERO* series. Carmen is the only reason to watch this tired school-girl comedy, as she wears see-thru lingerie and does

a brief, but sexy, strip for a policeman in the bathroom. Also in 1983, Russo had the title role in *MIA MOGLIE TORNA A SCUOLA*, playing the "wife who returns to school" (a literal translation of the film's title). She leaves husband Renzo Montagnani (whose tits hasn't this guy grabbed?) and goes back to school against his wishes. Once there, half the school's male population lusts after her (including a professor, the good-looking guy, and the nerd), and her roommate is Cinzia De Ponti (another Miss Italy, this time from 1979). Montagnani wears a variety of disguises (a doctor, a gypsy, and a hippie) to sneak in to see his wife, but always comically fails. Russo (who looks even more beautiful than usual) wears tight, cleavage revealing clothes, transparent nighties, lingerie, and has a nude shower scene. The ending has her losing her clothes (stripped to a black bra, G-string, and stockings, her "trademark" outfit) in front of the school board due to Renzo's antics.

In *TI SPACCO IL MUSO, BIMBA* (1984), a detective comedy, Russo plays a sexy femme fatale who helps inept private investigator Sergio Leonardi (and his sleuthing dog) solve Paola Senatore's husband's murder. Russo dances, strips, and looks great, but can't do much to save the lame plot. Her last film appearance was in 1988's *RIMINI RIMINI UN ANO DOPO*, a sequel to Sergio Corbucci's *RIMINI RIMINI* the previous year.

Carmen Russo married fellow *DRIVE-IN* dancer Enzo Paolo Turchi in 1987 after a 4 year engagement. Her acting career got placed on the "back burner" while she devoted most of her time to her new husband. She also changed her appearance around this time and ended up resembling her husband: she got her hair cut very short and dyed it platinum blonde. She occasionally appears on various TV shows, but isn't in the public eye anymore. Tabloids and magazines like *GIN FIZZ* continue to publish articles about the controversy about her chest being natural or man-made. If Carmen has indeed retired, at least she left behind an entertaining body (of work!) to remember her by.

[Thanks to Craig Ledbetter and Max Della Mora]



ENZO G. CASTELLARI

Part 2 of an interview conducted by
PETER BLUMENSTOCK & CHRISTIAN KESSLER

ETC - In 1978 you were announced as the director of *ZOMBI 2* (*ZOMBIE*). Lucio Fulci directed this picture. What happened?

EC - Well, actually I refused to do that film. I love action movies but I don't think I'm the right director for horror or zombie-films. I have no experience with this type of picture and I also don't like them very much. Fulci had many financial problems at the time, and with this film he was able to solve all of them. He still thanks me every once and a while because I refused to do this film and, because of that, saved his neck (laughs loud). Fulci was down and finished at the time, but with that picture he was reborn, his new career began.

ETC - 1990 *I GUERRIGERI DAL BRONX* (1990: *BRONX WARRIORS*) reminds me a lot

of a comic book. Who had the idea for this film?

EC - The basic story came from Fabrizio De Angelis, the producer. But as usual, I changed almost everything during shooting. Near the end, I didn't even read the script-pages for the next shooting day since I knew I had a completely different vision on the whole subject, so I just did it my way (laughs). It was a lot of fun to invent all those bizarre gangs, such as the one on roller-skates. One big problem was the leading actor Mark Gregory. I saw him in a fitness-gym and thought he would be perfect for the leading role. He's a really strange person with a lot of family-problems in his past. His father was an alcoholic, his mother died due to some strange circumstances. You can see in his face that he is quite a troubled

person which was of course good for me and for the film, but the rest of the team had a lot of problems dealing with him. I had to talk over every scene, every detail, had to explain how he had to move, how to act, how his face should look until the whole thing turned out the way I wanted it to. It was really hard work. Don't misunderstand me, he's quite intelligent, but, especially the stunt-coordinator, had incredible problems with him. Each day they had big quarrels on the set. I had to calm down my stunt coordinator, tell him that he should forget all the personal difficulties and just concentrate on his job. If he's helping Gregory to do a scene well, no matter what problems might occur, he's helping me.

ETC - The film looks pretty expensive by Italian standards and especially for a Fabrizio De Angelis production.

EC- Yes, we had a budget of about \$1 Million, which is indeed a large amount of money for such a production here in Italy. Fabrizio De Angelis is a very interesting producer. He understood which scenes needed a lot of money to make the whole thing more credible and interesting. I was really surprised. When I asked for two or three more shooting days to create a special scene, it was absolutely no problem for him. I asked for more cars, more bikes, more extras, no problem at all. He understood me as a director and was really interested in getting a good looking picture. He's really an incredible producer, just great. He's also directing, did you now that? His pseudonym is Larry Ludman (laughs loud). Unfortunately he is a far worse director than he is as producer. He's just directing for business reasons I think. De Angelis is really an exceptionally intelligent guy. Unfortunately there are no more producers like him around in the Italian movie business. The profession "producer" is almost gone. Nowadays there are some strange TV moguls raising money for films. They put 40 percent of the budget in their own bank, another 40 percent in the account of their children and the rest can be

used for the film. That's just disgusting. There's also the problem of the market situation. The Americans control the whole scene and what they want has to be done here in Italy. No American audience wants to see Italian actors in a B-movie. So what can you do? The good Italian actors are not usable, fine American actors are too expensive and the cheap ones are far from watchable (laughs).

ETC - With a few exceptions, such as Donald Pleasance or Fred Williamson for example.

EC - Of course. Fred Williamson is a great guy and one of the most experienced moviemakers I've ever met. He really knows everything about filmmaking. It's great when you just have to say a few words to an actor and you see in his eyes that he understands exactly what you want him to do. Another fantastic guy was James Franciscus. Well, he wasn't really an amazing actor but, just like Williamson, he knew so much about a director's job that he made work really wonderful.

ETC - SINBAD appears to be a production where many problems were involved. Luigi Cozzi was first supposed to be the director from what I've heard.

EC - Well, the Italian partner-company of Cannon-USA called me and offered me that project. It was planned as a television movie in two parts and my version, which ran 210 minutes, was really enjoyable, funny and full of weird action. I never finished shooting the film since Cannon ran out of money. I think they went bankrupt, and so the film remained unfinished, gathering dust on the shelves for quite a long time. I really don't know how they managed to raise money so Cozzi could finish the picture. When I was in the States I watched the video tape: Oh my God (laughs loud). It's so incredibly bad. There is a mother telling a bedtime story to her child (Note: Luigi Cozzi's daughter Giada). Such stupid "Once upon a time..." stuff. It is so awful, unbelievable. It's a movie I would declare as absolutely

unwatchable, don't see it (laughs loud). My version had a long explanation about the character's origins. Sinbad travelled the world to find his friends and such stuff. It was a really nice fairy-tale adventure. I prepared all the storyboards, all the FX-scenes, which were supposed to be shot afterwards but this never happened. Actually I'm not responsible for one single FX scene in this film. It's all Cozzi's work.

ETC - Do some of your relatives work in your movies every once in a while? For example I noted "Stefania Girolami" as an actress in L'ULTIMO SQUALO (1980).

EC - Yes, she's my daughter and also my first assistant on the set. I also have a brother, Enio Girolami, who was a very famous actor here in Italy during the fifties and sixties. Enio was one of the three top-stars here. At that time I was just "Enio Girolami's brother", so during my time at college, I was very proud to have such a famous brother whom everybody loved. Sometimes I cast him in my movies, in a little role, just for fun. You can also see me every once and a while as an actor. For example me and my brother are in an early scene from 1990...

ETC - You've changed, over your entire career, producers and companies again and again. Is there a special reason why you prefer to stay independent without any long lasting ties to a specific company?

EC - I just love being independent and doing whatever I want to. I don't like to be a producer, not even on my own movies. I very often have many problems with producers. I want more money, more shooting days and they just refused to give it to me. I think if I would produce myself, there would be always some sort of fight between me as the producer and the director inside me. I know how hard it is for a filmmaker to shoot a picture with no money available. Also, I was a little bit afraid of losing the fun I usually have when I'm

directing, since you have to keep an eye on the budget if your responsible for the production. You can see that quite obviously with the films of Fabrizio "Ludman" De Angelis. His pictures as a director are the cheapest and poorest you can imagine, no sets, no FX, no extras, absolutely nothing. He's just thinking about the money and forgets the actual film. That's the reason why I don't want to become a producer.

ETC - TUAREG IL GUERRIERO DEL DESERTO (Tuareg, The Desert Warrior, 1983) is quite an unusual film with an interesting story.

EC - As you may know, the picture was based on a book which was a big bestseller, especially in the Spanish speaking countries. A Spanish producer bought the rights to it, so Tuareg was declared a Spanish/Italian co-production, but there was also money from the States, Israel and many film other companies who were also interested in getting involved after the film was finished. The two main producers gave the whole budget to an executive producer, the husband of Barbara Bouchet by the way, and this turned out to be an incredible mess. He knew nothing about a producer's job, so there were a lot of money problems at the end. We shot the film in Israel and nothing was organized over there. The Spanish producer understood all those problems, so the whole production moved to Almeria Spain, where all the Spaghetti-Western were shot. The whole ending was filmed in Spain and the producer put in some extra money from his own pocket to save the film and to make the ending big and impressive. However, I love the film very much since I put a lot of personal things in the story. Unfortunately it was a big flop in Italy, the biggest in my entire career. It was only shown for three days in cinemas, almost nobody wanted to see it, and then it disappeared. One reason for this might be the terrible Brooke Shields' film, Sahara, which opened one month before TUAREG and it got very bad reviews and was a big flop. The audience was perhaps not too enthusiastic to see another film that



takes place in a desert so soon (laughs loud). Of course this is more or less just a bad excuse since I really love the film and wanted to find a reason why it didn't make any money.

ETC - EXTRALARGE is the latest work you've done (at the time of this interview). Do you think that television movies are the future for Italian directors, since film-production is going down every year so rapidly?

EC - The situation at the moment is really worse. Nobody can think about productions without the involvement of TV-stations here in Italy. There is just no way to do something without RAI, Silvio Berlusconi and all those guys. It's really strange and I don't know why the situation changed in such a short time but unfortunately it did. You can only produce with them or for them. The problem is that there's a lot of politics involved in those TV-channels. Whenever there are any changes in the government, you can see how the TV programs change immediately. And of course everybody there is corrupt more or less. A guy from a leading party just has to make one short call and say "Well, I have a good friend who wants to make a movie, can you do something for him?" If you are one of the unlucky ones who doesn't have any political friends...well, that's

it. Say good bye to your career. I was never involved in the politics, I don't know any politicians at all. I don't even go to the election since I absolutely don't care about politics in this country. I know that this is a very big fault and that it's getting harder and harder for me each year to stay alive in this business. Especially since I never try to put any political messages or an ideology in my movies.

I just want to bring stories to the screen which are amusing, which mean something to me and not to some stupid politician. I am just shooting what I would also love to see as a spectator. Actually the producers had a completely different director in mind to do the Extralarge series. I think they wanted to have Enzo Barboni, you know him under the pseudonym E. B. Clucher. He did a lot of Bud Spencer movies before, so they thought he might be the perfect choice. Barboni refused to do it since he had finished another film with Bud Spencer earlier. He's quite old now and not willing to work that much anymore. The next director they had in mind was Sergio Corbucci. There were also some strange problems with him so at last they called me (laughs).

I'm really very happy with Extralarge and it was a big success here on television. Although I have to say it was one of the hardest jobs I've ever done. We had to shoot each of the six episodes within five weeks. Each episode was on the technical level of a normal cinema production and about 90 - 100 minutes long. By the way, this was a very important point to me and also the reason why I accepted the job of making Extralarge. I told the producers that I do movies, not TV-movies, a serial or whatever. If the phrase "TV movie" simply means that everything looks cheaper and not very carefully made like the run-of-the-mill product, they can do that crap without me. I told the producers that I wanted to do six movies which would look like normal theatrical productions. And I think I'm able to say that I succeeded in this attempt. Everybody talks about Extralarge as a big production with a different, original Bud Spencer.

ETC - What was working with Bud Spencer like?

EC - I was never ever really interested in working with him. I saw a few of his old movies but I realized quickly that this was not the type of film I was interested in making. Actually I have to say that I just used Bud Spencer. He's quite old, he's fat and incredibly heavy. He has big problems with his bones because of his weight and so it is of course not easy for him to run, to fight, or just to get up from a chair (laughs). In all of his old movies he never used a double and you can see with each film how he's getting slower and slower. Just terrible. I insisted on using a double for him on Extralarge for some scenes. Of course his whole staff was very angry when they heard this idea. He has a very large staff with hairdressers, his own make-up crew, dialogue coach, cook, etc. I made up some excuses to use the double and I think he and his crew soon realized that this was a quite good idea since a seven month shooting period is extremely strenuous, especially for him. All the action scenes in EXTRALARGE were shot with a double. It was quite hard to convince him but when he saw the dailies later on, he was really fond of what I did with him and his double (laughs). At the end it was quite funny. He was just sitting in

his caravan, waiting to be called. Then we did a few close-ups of his face and that's it. "Thank you Mr. Pedersoli" (laughs).

ETC - EXTRALARGE is a German/Italian co-production, isn't it?

EC - Yes, that was a quite strange thing. We were already in pre-production when the Italian producer told me that there was some German money from a company called Tele-München involved and that we also have to use some German actors.

I was not fond of this idea since I normally use direct sound. I was afraid that the German actors might have too strong of an accent. Then he showed me some agency-photos. I didn't like his suggestions at all. However I have to say that he was absolutely right. All the actors were really great. Especially Vadim Glowna, he plays a priest in the "Miami Killer" episode, and was amazing.

ETC - Do you have a lot of discussions with producers while editing a movie?

EC - Sometimes. I always want an explanation when the producer has a different viewpoint. I just don't like being ordered what to do and what not to do. I'm not perfect, so if somebody is



One of Castellari's most underrated films:
Kyra: Last House Near The Lake

able to convince me of his point of view, why not? But I just can't stand producers who don't give a damn about the director's opinion. This always leads to a big fight with me sooner or later. Usually it is not such a big problem here in Italy, but of course is in the States. When I made my pictures with the producer Carlo Ponti in the States, I always refused to sign a contract where the final-cut was up to him. I was much younger at that time and willing to fight with everybody who wanted to change my films (laughs).

ETC - Are there any of your movies which you don't like?

EC - Of course. For example SENSITIVITA (aka KYRA, LAST HOUSE NEAR THE LAKE, 1979). We made that one during my holidays in Spain, it was a completely Spanish production, involving some questionable money that had been left from some other, even more strange production. It was some sort of joke for me but then the producer came and said that there is no more money left to complete the film and that he needs my "name" to raise more from other production companies. I was not very happy to see my name on that picture. However he failed to get more money, I returned to Rome and from what I've heard, the Spanish producer finished the picture by himself later on. I've never seen it but I'm sure it's completely unwatchable. However, I had a great time with my friends at the Costa Brava (laughs). [Note: Castellari has since seen the finished film and was pleasantly surprised with the outcome.]

I also don't like HAMMERHEAD very much. It was almost the same story as with SENSITIVITA. We did that picture in Jamaica. The producer promised me an acceptable budget but was not able to raise the cash. Unfortunately he told me this while we were shooting (laughs). We had a lot of problems in paying the crew, the actors, everything. Then we had to stop, start again a few weeks later, quit again, and so on. It was a catastrophe and that's also the way the film looks.

ETC - On which projects are you working on at the moment?

EC - I have several and I hope to be able to realize at least a few. First of all I'm trying to make a sort of sequel to KEOMA, called NIKITA JONES (ED.NOTE- This eventually became the film, JONATHAN OF THE BEARS) The script is already finished and RAI-Italy might be interested in contributing money to this film's production. Franco Nero is again playing the leading role and it is supposed to take place in Russia. Then there is a film called LION OF THE DESERT. It's an Italian/Moroccan co-production, starring Franco Nero and Omar Sharif. Unfortunately the guys in Morocco have some political problems down there. The King has to give each film project the OK and it seems he refuses to do it on this one, I don't know why. Then there is also another TV-movie project, dealing with the famous Italian comic-book character Tex Willer. It might become a series of about 10 episodes. And last but not least I have a very interesting story about "smokers". These "smokers" are young children, five or six years old, who fight in some underground clubs in New York for the pleasure of Yuppies and other strange persons. Actually this is not an invented story. When I was in New York, a friend of mine took me to these places and it's really unbelievable what's going on over there. I think that's a story that has to be told and it's also quite suspenseful and contains a lot of action. I prepared a main story and then chose an American scriptwriter to prepare the final version with me. He stayed three months at my house to write it and I think the result is really something very extraordinary. Then we went to New York, conducted interviews with these children, did a lot of research and visited possible locations. Unfortunately, nobody is really interested in producing this type of film so I think I might produce this film one day myself. I think it's really worth making!

[Special thanks goes to Loris Curci; without his help this interview might have never happened!]



MY BABY WAS BLACK EMANUELLE

by ERIK SULEV

Without a doubt, the Black Emanuelle films starring Laura Gemser make up the most well-known series in Italian (s)exploitation. Depending on who you listen to, these movies are either terribly entertaining, or incredibly boring. I won't put my head on the block and proclaim every feature a genuine classic of the genre, but devotees of ETC must agree that the series often receives a bum-rap it doesn't always deserve. So what if the movies are occasionally tasteless, and more often, just plain ridiculous? Isn't that what we paid to see? Perhaps something's not quite right, but I have a genuine soft spot for these things, and I can't

understand how anyone can nod off during maestro D'Amato's bizarre world visions. Besides, they really don't make 'em like this anymore, in Italy, or anywhere else for that matter, and at the very least, the Black Emanuelle series serves as an exquisite time capsule example of Italian exploitation's peak years.

What exactly is the Black Emanuelle series? The answer isn't as clear cut as we once believed, despite the number of movies with "Emanuelle" in the title. No, Joe D'Amato is not the creator of the series nor is he the only director to do a Black Emanuelle film. As well,

numerous re-titlings and the frequent misuse of "Emanuelle" in film titles by producers hoping to cash in on the "official" series, have made the task of separating the "real" from the "fakers" all the more difficult. Hopefully, this article will guide the faithful ETC reader through Black Emanuelle's many adventures, as well as offering a few biased opinions about them. Finally, it's a modest attempt to differentiate the "official" from the "not quite, but close" movies. With luck, the Black Emanuelle series might even start to make sense - no promises though.

Enough has already been written about Laura Gemser, a.k.a. Black Emanuelle, (although the uninitiated may want to peruse *Giallo Pages #2* for Ian Caunce's excellent profile on her), so we'll skip right to the meat of the matter when Albert (Adalberto Albertini) Thomas' breakthrough film **Black Emanuelle** was released in 1975. Obviously a cash-in on the Sylvia Kristel hit, Thomas' version imitates the episodic qualities of the source material (both literary and cinematic), and sets the standards for the rest to follow: Emanuelle (Gemser) jets off for an exotic photojournalism assignment, only to find love in all the right (and wrong) places. Thomas' film also takes things a little more seriously which serves as a pleasant change of pace from D'Amato's later visions of excess. Still, it's hard to accept the film as high drama when Emanuelle takes on an entire field hockey team on a train! Nevertheless, the film serves as an excellent example of of Italian widescreen softcore, that's done with a flair that we'll probably never see again. As an added bonus, the movie sports a dynamite huhhlegum-rock theme that just won't go away once it invades your brain. And Gemser? True Gemser fans believe that the woman can do wrong, (hone-rack comments be damned), and here she sets the stage for her most famous persona. By the way, it's revealed that "Emanuelle" is not her real name, just a professional one. Her actual identity is "Mary Jordan", a revelation that is never heard again in the series. How's that for trivia? Picky readers may also want to know that **Black**

Emanuelle is not Gemser's first appearance as Emanuelle - she's credited as Emanuelle in 1974's **Hot Dreams** (aka *Amore Libero*), which is strictly a coincidence since the film has nothing to do with the series, official or otherwise. Finally, fact freaks may be curious to know that Gemser's first appearance in an Emmanuelle film (note the double "m" in the Kristel versions), is as a masseuse in Franco Giacobetti's **Emanuelle 2** who gives Ms. Kristel a ruh down.

Things get a little tricky after Gemser jumped ship from Thomas' franchise only to end up in D'Amato's camp for the lackluster **Emanuelle in Bangkok** (aka *Emanuelle Reports From The Orient*). Some reports say that Joe D'Amato "hijacked" the series from Thomas, lending to the theory that his better known features aren't in fact official entries in the series. Support for this also lies in the fact that Thomas attempted to continue on with his own sequel starring Sharon Lesley. Whatever the case, both movies are a step down quality-wise from the first film. D'Amato actually did do an Emanuelle film prior to **Emanuelle in Bangkok** in 1975 called **Emanuelle's Revenge** which starred Rosemarie Lindt as the (white) heroine. Although it's not part of the Black Emanuelle mythos, it's worth a viewing thanks to an engaging revenge-themed script and a bloody finale which incorporates the death of Emanuelle! D'Amato's first attempt with Gemser however, is the weakest of all his Black Emanuelle films, thanks to a relatively "safe" approach that fails to satisfy (although it did well enough to guarantee further Emanuelle adventures courtesy of D'Amato and Co.). Even Gemser and her illustrious co-stars such as Ivan Rassimov can't make this equally aimless and clueless sucker fly. Of all the Black Emanuelle films, this is easily the worst of the bunch. The competition's results don't quite measure up either, since Albert Thomas' sequel isn't much better despite some initial promise.

Black Emanuelle 2 (aka **Black Emanuelle no 2**) starts off with a credit sequence that can only be described as "Meyer-esque". A fast-paced montage made up of Emanuelle's foreign

adventures, including scenes of her being tortured by evil military types, as well as the expected sex clips, would seem to serve as a prelude of things to come - a favorite technique of Russ Meyer. Unfortunately none of the scenes are from the movie, and these are the best scenes in the film! What happened to them? Where did they go? What's left is a bizarre example of cinematic psychotherapy as a doctor attempts to help amnesiac supermodel *Emanuelle* reconstruct her past. Those hoping for Sharon Lesley playing the same role as Laura Gemser (which would have been interesting), will be disappointed, since plotwise there is no connection whatsoever. Lesley does an adequate job with the part she's been given, but it's hard to shake the specter of the original. It takes a long 92 minutes for it to be revealed that *Emanuelle's* psyche has been hocked by the violent death of her brother and her subsequent gang-rape. The good doctor's advice? "Count to seven everytime a powerful emotion gets the upper hand." Say what?!? The movie is incredibly dated, but this whacked out sense of biphness actually adds to its limited appeal. Thomas must have realized that his involvement with the *Black Emanuelle* series was finished since he never followed up with any other sequels or projects with Lesley. Figuring that Gemser was too well identified with the role, Thomas moved his series in a new direction with a new ethnic drawing card, and the result was *Yellow Emanuelle*.

If *Yellow Emanuelle* has any legacy whatsoever, it will be that it was the first film to legally show pubic hair in Hong Kong theaters, other than that, it's an ignorant reworking of *Madame Butterfly* that relies on offensive racial stereotypes. Chai Lee is actually pretty good as "Amy Wong", a nurse who falls in love with a British pilot in this overly melodramatic soap opera. Like Thomas' other two films, *Yellow Emanuelle* displays a serious face, even when it's being intensely moronic, which Y.M. usually is. Far too often, the plot wallows in it's lead character's self-pity, the nadir of ethics is when she enrolls herself in a brothel school when she mistakenly believes her lover has abandoned

her. The movie does have a few bright moments however, including a pre-Cicciolina Ilona Staller in a supporting role as a troublesome hitch. One suspects however, that despite the initial novelty that it may have had, this "sequel" must have been disappointing to Thomas, since no followups were ever produced. And then again, this may also be because at the end of the movie, everyone's dead! At the other production camp, D'Amato's *Black Emanuelle* projects were doing very well, and his series now headed towards its peak years.

Joe D'Amato's cinematic contributions are unquestionably the films that most of us associate with the *Black Emanuelle* series. Besides *Emanuelle in Bangkok*, the D'Amato years gave the world the infamous *Emanuelle in America* (1976); the exotic *Emanuelle Around the World* (1977); the unjustly forgotten *Emanuelle and the White Slave Trade* (1977); and lastly, everyone's favorite, *Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals* (1977).

The second "sequel" *Emanuelle in America* has earned its fair share of infamy thanks to some vicious "snuff" footage and Pedro the horse. The offending hits, including some brief snippets of hardcore material (none with Gemser) were all edited out of the U. S. release. Curiously, the unbearably brutal "snuff" material was used by the Ontario Censor Board as part of a "promo reel" to justify its existence (the Board, not the movie!) to the province's citizens who took a tour of the Board's premises. Rumor has it that while taking the Censor Board's walk-through tour, David Cronenberg saw the footage which later influenced his decision to make *Videodrome*! Regardless, *Emanuelle In America* is a movie that is not easily forgotten. Starting off as goofy sexploitation (some parts of which are actually quite amusing), it eventually moves into the realms of graphic and exploitive horror when hot-shot reporter *Emanuelle* goes under covers to reveal a corrupt U.S. Senator's evil-doings. You really have to wonder what D'Amato was thinking when he put this movie together. When even the activities of Pedro the horse are overshadowed by the visceral footage, you know



that you have something really unpleasant in your hands.

Far less repellent is *Emanuelle's* next adventure *Emanuelle Around the World* (aka *Emanuelle Vs Violence To Women*), which should be thought of as *Emanuelle* in Bangkok done right! The plots are more or less interchangeable as Gemser travels across the world in order to get the latest scoop for her newspaper, but ending up in just about everyone's bed along the way. The most grotesque thing about this feature is George Eastman as an Eastern Rasputin styled love machine! Otherwise, it's an enjoyable travelogue softcore picture that mysteriously clicks in all the right places. Video collectors should seek out the Wizard Video release in the small box on a T105 tape that is a "warmer" version than the later T90 tape release which tones down a few scenes as well as eliminating some very brief glimpses of hardcore action.

The next outing, *Emanuelle and the White Slave Trade* is more goofy than lurid in spite of

the title. Without a doubt, this is vintage D'Amato. Why? Because it's the typical "kitchen sink" styled movie that D'Amato enthusiasts will eat up, absurdities and all. Everyone else will cringe at the results, but it's their loss! After thirty minutes into the movie, *Emanuelle* actually does end up on the trail of a white slavery ring based in San Diego. Naturally, she goes undercover, much to the delight of the lesbian Madam who squeals with glee every time she peers through the two way mirror at *Emanuelle* hard at work. *Emanuelle* befriends "Stephen" the Madam's right hand man/woman who just happens to be a transvestite. Escaping to a bowling alley (!) they have a kungfu showdown against the Madam's forces and Stephen is beaten to death with a howling pin. *Emanuelle* is then taken away to a mental hospital where she is to be given a lobotomy. Using the old "hide in the laundry cart" trick, *Emanuelle* easily escapes, ending up at the docks, and then phones in her story and gets ready for her next adventure in Sweden! What?! Absolutely amazing stuff that will boggle just about anyone's mind. How a picture as strange as this disappeared for so long is anyone's guess, but those passing up on this one will be missing a true treasure.

Almost everyone's seen *Emanuelle* and the *Last Cannibals* (aka *Trap Them & Kill Them*), the next and final film in the D'Amato series. D'Amato's foray into the cannibal genre has been pretty much reviled by critics who were unsympathetic to the feature's apparent lack of good taste. Grasping for plot ideas, D'Amato's efforts resulted in a movie that wasn't the best of the Italian cannibal flicks, but it wasn't the worst either. In fact, the movie is far more watchable than it deserves to be, and its racial intolerance is tempered somewhat by the ludicrous air that permeates the goings-on. D'Amato pads things out a little too much with a lengthy sampling of softcore groping from just about everyone in the cast, but when things slow down a little too much, he awakens the snoozers in the audience with some fairly gruesome gore. Obviously a precursor to D'Amato's gory horror phase, *Emanuelle* and

the Last Cannibals is more of a guilty pleasure than most people who would care to admit.

It's a shame that the next Black Emanuelle feature announced by D'Amato (**Emanuelle, the Black Panther**) was never made since it's evident that the series was heading off into bizarre new directions. Could Emanuelle meet Anthropophagus been around the corner?

There were several more Emanuelle themed pictures with Gemser, although none are officially Black Emanuelle films. Some, such as **Emanuelle e le Porno Notti nel Mondo** (Sexy Night Report) actually use "Emanuelle" in the title but have no connection to the series other than its star. The film is a Mondo styled excursion into the seamy sex spots of the world courtesy of your host, Laura Gemser. Although the film is poorly done, it manages to start off strongly thanks to a few inept but outrageous sequences. The gorilla-woman sex show sequence is so unbelievable that it actually serves as the movie's "high-point", as some poor guy in a monkey suit desperately tries to convey how turned on he is. The rest of the film however, quickly runs out of steam, and it becomes a repetitive exercise in tedium on the viewer's part while failing at being both a Mondo and a sex film.

A far better "Emanuellesque" feature would be Joe D'Amato's **Black Cobra** (aka **Black Eva**) which pits exotic dancer Gemser and her snakes against Jack Palance who acts as a general hater throughout the pic. D'Amato actually "remade" **Black Cobra** into a hard-core picture that uses some footage from the original, with new XXX footage featuring D'Amato's favorite cocksman, Mark Shannon. This dubious achievement known as **Porno Exotic Love** deserves mention here, since it was also released as **Emanuelle In Tahiti**. The confusing state of the Emanuelle films can be blamed partly on Gemser's appearances in several features that promote themselves as Emanuelle movies but are anything but. One movie, **Emanuelle On Tahoo Island**, features Gemser in the lead role but her character isn't even called "Emanuelle"! Thankfully, other "fakers" aren't as deceptive and actually feature Gemser

as "Emanuelle", although it's clear that these incarnations of the character have little to do with the situations established by Thomas and D'Amato.

Brundello Rondi's **Smooth Velvet, Raw Silk** (1977) is out under another video title in America, so if you rent this, or **Emanuelle in Egypt**, you'll be seeing the same feature, which depending on your tastes, may or may not be a good thing. Those looking for a little comedy with their T&A may want to try out **Emanuelle In the Country** (1978) which features Gemser as Doctor Emanuelle (!) whose arrival at a coastal Italian village stirs up the locals' passions. Never to be confused with highbrow humor at any turn, the film does have some genuinely funny moments that only lovers of Italian sex comedies can fully appreciate.

Rougher Emanuelle fare would most certainly be **Emanuelle Queen of Sados** (1976) directed by Ilias Milonakos as one of the two "Greek" features done by Gemser (the other being the absolutely awful **Love Camp**). Things literally start off with a bang as Gemser gets down to business with a fellow whose balls are unpleasantly squished between his thighs in several shots. Gemser excels at playing a bitch who has her abusive husband killed so she can control his orange empire through his underage daughter Livia. Things really get rough when Mario, Emanuelle's hit-man, blackmails her for a bigger slice of the pie, while abusing several women along the way. As the token scumbag of the picture, Mario easily meets the requirements when he shoves one woman's face in the hidet. In case there's any sympathy left for the guy, he rapes Livia during an extremely unpleasant sequence in order to make his intentions clear to Emanuelle. After all this build-up, things end very abruptly, leaving the impression that despite the eye-grabbing title **Emanuelle Queen of Sados** is essentially a piece of forgettable trash. The version that originally came out on Vidmark is uncut, but beware of retitled versions called **Emanuelle's Daughter** which are all heavily censored.

Far better (believe it or not), are Vincent Dawn's (Bruno Mattei) pair of "Emanuelle in

Prison' films which share identical casts and settings which are often confused with one another. The first, released here as *Caged Women* (*Violenza in un Carcere Femminile*, 1982) returns Emanuelle's occupation to that of investigative journalist when she goes undercover in the brutal Santa Katarina Women's Penitentiary on behalf of Amnesty International (do they know of their place in exploitation film history?). Donning the alias of "Laura Kendall", she poses as a prisoner in order to expose the nefarious goings-on. Unfortunately, Emanuelle isn't as smart as she thinks she is when she neglects to tell anyone what she's up to, so when the prison authorities find out, no one is in a position to help her. Mattei uses all of the usual W.I.P. clichés with gusto, including the sympathetic prison doctor, the helpful prison veteran (Gabriele Tinti, who in real life was married to Gemser. He died last year from cancer.), horny hullydyes, in other words the works! He does however, know how to inject a dose of Euro-styled sleaze in all the right places. Nowhere is this anymore apparent than in the scene where Gemser is savagely chewed by hordes of rats. Even though the American release tones this down a little bit (extended scenes of the rats chewing on her face and eyes are missing), the scene remains repellent nonetheless. If you're not expecting top-notch direction (after all, this is Bruno Mattei we're talking about), or looking for socially redeeming values of any sort (don't let the Amnesty angle fool ya), then you'll probably enjoy this guilty pleasure. Euro trash favorite Lorraine de Selle is a hoot as the repressed Wardress, who would just love to let more than her hair down.

The second feature, *Blade Violent*, released the following year is available on video in the U.S. as *Women's Prison Massacre*. More often than not, the two films are often confused with one another, thanks to the identical casts and sets. Mattei directs under the pseudonym Gilbert Roussel, with all the flair that we've come to expect from him. Confused viewers should remember that this is the one where Emanuelle is falsely accused of drug trafficking

and stuck in the slammer, only to have her life further complicated by four male convicts on the run (led by Gabriele Tinti doing a wonderfully sleazy turn), who hole up in the women's prison, causing trouble for just about everyone. Once again, Mattei heaps on enough indignities and abuse so most viewers will want to take a shower. While the two features couldn't exactly be called charming, one has to give Mattei credit for actually creating two movies that aren't immediately forgettable like rest of his features.

If you thought that Emanuelle had done just about everything (and everyone) in her adventures, then you may have missed Joseph Warren's (Giuseppe Vari) contribution to the Black Emanuelle cycle: *Sister Emanuelle* (1977). Emanuelle's life in the convent is complicated somewhat when she is assigned to look after Monica, the school's latest arrival who proves to be nothing but trouble. Not surprisingly, Sister Emanuelle finds her vow of chastity severely strained thanks to the affections of both Monica and Rene (Gabriele Tinti), an escaped criminal who is hiding on the grounds. Director Warren probably realized how ridiculous the entire effort was, and took the easy way out with the over-used "it's only a dream" ending. Emanuelle finally comes to terms with herself and admits that the convent life is not for her. Some foreign versions are a little more graphic in the sex scenes but actually run a bit shorter since other footage is missing. Not exactly a classic release but worth a viewing for curious Catholics.

It's almost for certain that other Emanuelle retitlings exist. In fact, it wouldn't be surprising if there's still another "lost" Black Emanuelle hiding somewhere. Who knows? Hopefully, the status of the series as a whole is now a little clearer to the once bewildered. If you've never seen one of the films and have been dissuaded in the past by overblown negative criticism, take a chance on some of the better entries. A tiny amount of patience may be required on occasion, from even the most stalwart of ETC fanatics. With a little luck and love, you too can go all the way... with Black Emanuelle.

ANTONIO PICA

ETC INTERVIEW: PART 2

by Gian Luca Castoldi

translation by Simone Romano

ETC - What about Helga Liné, who was in Archer Of Fire?

AP - That was not the only film I made with her. . .

ETC - You also made Santo Y Misterio Del Cuadro with her.

AP - That was another film where I had a fight scene with El Santo. All I can tell you, is that Helga Liné was a very beautiful girl, and I suppose she is still beautiful today.

ETC - You once went to France, to shoot Folie Des Grandeurs, with Louis De Funes.

AP - Yes. I played a Spanish nobleman. That was a great comedy, and it was very successful, thanks not only to its cast, but especially to the director, Gerard Oury, who was a real wonder.

ETC - One of the actresses in that film was Karin Schubert, who recently became famous for her hardcore performances...

AP - She played the Spanish Queen, but I had no scenes with her. I didn't know she now does 'X' films, because, as I told you, I have lost interest in that period of my life.



ETC - In Ella you danced a flamenco With Carmen Sevilla, a Spanish idol.

AP - No, hombre, no. I had a dance scene with her, but it was not a Sevillian dance. That was a modern comedy, directed by Julio Buchs, a man with a special intelligence and sense of humor.

ETC - In 1972, a mainstream film: Travels With My Aunt, directed by George Cukor...

AP - I have never seen this film, either; I have been told my role was 'An Elegant Man'. That was just a bit part: I entered, dropped a bag, and walked out. I had no dialogue.

ETC - What about Duccio Tessari's Gli Eroi (Heroes)?

AP - It's a WW2 film set in Africa, about a treasure hunt. I remember spent a month with Gianni Garko, in Cairo. He is a good actor, but I don't know him very well, personally.

ETC - In 1972, you were also in one of the best Spanish horror films, Hunchback of the Morgue, with Paul Naschy.

AP - Yes, I think I played a cop, Francisco Lara Polop produced the picture: he was a small, independent producer, but he really loved the cinema, and lived for it. [Note: he directed, among others, **Huerto Del Frances**, one of Paul Naschy's best films] The last time I saw him was 5 or 6 years ago, and he told me he was still making films in the same way... with no money, that is.

ETC - You were in Leon Klimovsky's Vengeance of the Zombies, also with Paul Naschy. You made all your horror films with Naschy, was this planned?

AP - I was in touch with a certain producer, and I had to work always with him, in his productions. They might cast

me in three comedies in a row, then four consecutive Westerns...

ETC - You usually signed contracts for 3 or 4 films?

AP - No, no. Each contract was for one film. I was in another Naschy film, **House of Psychotic Women**: I was the French policeman who solved the mystery. Paul Naschy was a humble, almost shy guy, very easy to work with.

ETC - Do you remember anything about Carlos Aured?

AP - He was a young guy, who had just started making films, from the Catalan Film School.

ETC - You then acted in yet another Santo film: Santo Vs Dr Death. Did you have to go back to Mexico again?

AP - No, that film was almost entirely shot in Europe.

ETC - Santo came to Europe?

AP - No. I think this was a Pelimex project; they were a Mexican company shooting films in Europe. Santo did his scenes in Mexico...

ETC - In 1974, Cipolla Colt (Spaghetti Western), with Franco Nero (one of the worst Westerns ever)...

AP - I had a scene in the beginning, playing a Mexican farmer, even though I don't look like a "chicano".

ETC - In Los Mil Ojos Del Asesino, you had an important role, playing Anthony Steffen's wicked alter-ego.

AP - Correct. That was a drug story, apparently inspired by a real episode that occurred in Portugal; I played a narc.

ETC - Did they ever ask you to change your name?

AP - I was asked once, but I refused. They changed my name once, without asking me beforehand, for an important film. When I saw the ads, they had written "John Foss" instead of Antonio Pica. So I went to the producer and forced him to withdraw all the advertising material. On the print, I was credited with my real name.

ETC - In 1974/75 you decided to put an end to your film career.

AP - In 1975 I started working in the oil industry again, in the North Sea. When I had a few weeks off, if I there were some small roles, I would accept. For instance, I had a hit part in *L'Uomo Che Sfido L'Organizzazione*, with Stephen Boyd; and in *Ah, Si?...Io Lo Dico A Zorro*, with George Hilton, a children's comedy, a very nice, special version of Zorro.

ETC - You quit the cinema at the same time Generalissimo Franco died. Just a coincidence?

AP - I actually quit before his death. Anyway, my only duty as a Spanish citizen was the

military service; then I spent my life working around the world, so I always considered myself a citizen of the world.

ETC - In those years there was very strict censorship in Spain.

AP - As far as I am concerned, it never bothered me, because my films had nothing... strange. That was a particular period, but censorship still exists, and several subjects are still considered taboo.

ETC - Were the producers very powerful in the Spanish cinema?

AP - Obviously, there were very powerful, rich producers: with political support. I guess today the Socialist producers are more influential and powerful than the others, like the Fascists were back then.

ETC - How would you judge your experience in the film world, overall?

AP - I didn't receive anything from it. I mean, I worked, and was paid for it; but that aside, it was not a memorable experience. I am sorry I could not remember much about several films, but since I quit my film career, I don't think back to those days very often.

I am not fond of my film career, because of all the disappointments it caused me. I was a professional, but never envisioned myself as a real actor: I think-- to be a star, or a very good actor, you need to work hard for many years.

Vampire Happenings in Spain and Italy FOR THE LOVE OF GOTHIC

by Charles Bucklin

If you, like me, were disappointed in Francis Ford Coppola's non-vampire flick *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, and were appalled to hear that Tom Cruise was cast as Lestat in *Interview with a Vampire*...

Fear Not! As a vampire aficionado I have done a little research and have come up with a couple of movies from the past for your viewing pleasure and edification. It is my desire to bring to your attention two obscure vampire films that merit some long due praise, appreciation and at the least, a look.

It seems we live in a time where the "Gothic" has gained tremendous notoriety and attention. Anne Rice's vampire books are selling extremely well and her second novel ("Lestat") has been recently re-released in graphic novel form. Many Rock groups since the early eighties have also stylized their sound to the Gothic movement and have come up with imaginative titles such as *Nosferatu* and *Type O Negative*. *Vampire Circus: The Essential Vampire Theme Collection* has been recently released on CD via Silva Screen Records.

Happily, it seems the Gothic will be with us for some time and the vampire films I am going to discuss later in this article are rich in this beautiful movement. I call them diamonds in the rough because despite bad dubbing, hack handed reviews and plain ignorance these films have been known to an elite few and have survived despite overwhelming obstacles. The following are the movies and their country of origin: *Count Dracula's Great Love* - Spain, and *Slaughter of the Vampires* - Italy.

Count Dracula's Great Love and *Slaughter of the Vampires* are not great movies in the eyes of critics or even some of the most rabid vampire enthusiasts, however, they have some very fine points, sometimes bordering on

brilliance as they push the envelope of the vampire mythos and make them exemplary in the Gothic tradition.

For brevity's sake I will not go heavily into plot lines but rather give a short synopsis and then point out some of the more memorable highlights of each movie.

Count Dracula's Great Love (1972: Cinema Shares: Spain) (Also known as: *Cemetery Girls; Dracula's Virgin Lovers*). Director: Javier Aguirre Producer: Francisco Lara Polop Screen writers: Jacinto Molina, Alherta Insua. Cinematographer: Raul Perez Cubero Cast: Paul Naschy, Haydee Politoff, Rossana Yanni, Mirta Miller, Vic Winner, Ingrid Garbo, Julio Pena.

A group of travelers experience mechanical difficulties with their coach while traveling through Borgo Pass. They end up at a castle





inhabited by our favorite blood sucker, Count Dracula, who is posing as a doctor of a sanitarium. It seems that the Count is trying to revive his daughter and needs lots of blood especially "virgin" blood. Fortunately for him there are several "virgins" among the travelers and he proceeds to drain the lot. He falls in love with one of the women and proceeds to go through a change of heart about using her blood to revive his daughter. At the end of the movie, Dracula, in a fit of remorse drives a stake into his own heart.

What makes this stand out in the Vampire Hall of Fame is that the main character is played by one of Spain's leading Horror actor/director/writers - Paul Naschy (aka Jacinto Molina). Naschy is most known for his werewolf roles as the doomed Waldemar Daninsky. Naschy's Dracula is a tragic character who not only likes to suck necks, but enjoys adding a few strokes with the whip as well. This movie has plenty of atmosphere and beautiful colors, and although I am more fond of glorious black and white, the hues border on the intensity of an acid trip. For those fans who are familiar with Mario Bava's use of gels in cinematography you'll appreciate Javier

Aguirre's vivid colorization just as much. On a purely hormonal level, the movie's starlets are all Spanish beauties and they all take their tops off - which only adds to the fun. Probably one of my favorite moments occurs right before the opening credits as two moving men decide to loot the castle and get eighty-sixed - there is a beautiful opening as one of the men gets it with an axe between the eyes and falls down the stairs over and over as the opening credits begin to role.

Other note worthy moments would include: A nice whipping scene; the Spanish Brides taking a dip in the pool; Count Dracula appearing in negative image during a dream sequence; lots of running blood; the Count having sex and casting no reflection in a mirror by his bed; and plenty of slow motion as the newly made "Brides of Dracula" go hunting for more "virgin" blood for the Count. Plus, there is more dry ice fog utilized in this movie than some rock bands use in an entire concert - which gives the film a nice very ambience.

Now what do the other critics say about this fine film? The *Fantastic Cinema Subject Guide* by Messrs Bryan Senn and John Johnson (McFarland Press) give this film a 2 out of 10 viewing rating (which is not a bad rating considering they gave the classic *Black Sunday* only a 7 out of 10); Stephen Jones in his *Illustrated Vampire Guide* gave it a 1 1/2 hats which translated means - watchable. John Flynn in his *Vampire Opus Cinematic Vampires* (McFarland Press) calls this movie "one of the worst . . ." but, in all fairness to the movie, Flynn's hook tends to be filled with snooty and dismissive reviews and tons of inaccuracies - so what does he know!

Fun facts that should also be noted - Paul Naschy would later play other devils and demons in his films culminating in his monster extravaganza *Howl of the Devil* where he plays almost all of the Universal monsters from the past.

Another Nashmeister and Aguirre collaboration would be the gory *El Jorobado del la Morgue* (*Hunchback of the Morgue* - made in 1971).

Slaughter of the Vampires (1962; Pacemaker, Italy) (Also known as **Curse of the Blood Ghouls**). Director/Screenwriter: Roberto Mauri. Producer: Dino Sant' Ambrogio. Cinematographer: Ugo Brunelli. Cast: Walter Brandt, Dieter Eppler, Graziella Granata, Paolo Solvay, Gena Gimmy, Alfredo Rizzo, Edda Ferrouao, Mareta Procaccini.

A married couple decide to live in a castle which is harboring a vampire. They have a formal party and the vampire decides to show up spoiling the dinner. Since the wife of the hero looks like a fine candidate for his undead supper, the vampire decides to seduce and chow down on the woman. After spending a few moonlit nights with her, the vampire decides to move on to the couple's maid. He drains her and then you-know-what hits the fan. The undead wife and her maid go after the husband and try to get him to join the club. Fortunately, a cigar smoking Doctor comes to his aid. Together, the partially drained husband and the good Doctor are able to defeat the unholy trio and the movie ends with the Doc lighting up and riding off into the sunset in a horse drawn carriage.

What at a glance may sound to be standard vampire fare soon changes after a thoroughly enjoyable viewing. (I just recently re-watched this movie after reading an excellent review regarding this film by Conrad Widener in *Videooze* Number 5, Winter 1993.)

Right off the bat (no pun intended), I give this movie points for being filmed in beautiful black and white. Personally, I find that black and white film tends to heighten a sense of eeriness and disparateness so best exemplified in old horror movies.

Next, the film opens with a bang. As the credits begin to roll, we see one female vampire get "slaughtered" by a group of murderous villagers while her companion runs away. The companion turns out later to be "The Vampire" played effectively by Dieter Eppler.

Mr. Widener in his film review states, "Dieter Eppler doesn't have the commanding screen presence of Christopher Lee, or the charisma of German Rohles, but he's an adequate movie

vampire." Personally, I think Mr Widener misses the mark on this one as I thought Dieter Eppler was more than just adequate...

...in fact, I thought he was quite convincing as the cadaverous visitor. The problem lies in the fact that he is over shadowed in the film by the beautiful Ms. Graziella Granata. Granata, who plays the wife of Walter Brandt (the hero), literally steals the show as her buxom bosom heaves faster than a chimney hellsows on a cold winter's day.

Actually the movie is more about a woman's transformation into a vampire than anything else. Once Ms. Granata gets staked, the film rapidly comes to a close. Her performance in **Slaughter of the Vampires** is very reminiscent of Barbara Steele's performance in **Black Sunday** (without the clever character range that Ms Steele had in her movie).

Both women smoulder in their roles with a sensuality that is palpable to audiences the world over.

Other memorahle scenes would include the vampire being killed with spikes from an iron gate, an ending that is not "happy" (always refreshing), great sets and a movie that is streamlined so well that it gallops from start to finish without getting bogged down in the plot.

Now back to our panel of critics - **Fantastic Cinema Subject Guide**, by Bryan Senn and John Johnson give the film 2 out of 10 points (man, these guys are tough!); Stephen Jones' **Illustrated Vampire Guide** give the film - 1 Bat! (I take it back Bryan and John!); and John Flynn in his **Cinematic Vampire compilation** - due to omission - thankfully remains quiescent regarding the movie (Some complete vampire movie guide, huh?)

Other fun facts of interest - Walter Brandt played the hero in two other vampire movies - Renalto Polselli's **The Vampire** and the **Ballerina** and Piero Regnoli's **Playgirls and the Vampire**.

Paolo Solvay, the Van Helsing in the movie, later put down his cigar so he could direct **The Devil's Wedding Night**, **Desert Tigers** and **SS Hell Camp** (among many others) under the name Ivan Katansky.



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